the weekly
# Standard

MARCH 14, 2005

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PHILIP CHALK

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# Doug Brinkley's Latest Triumph

Veteran comic actor Douglas Brinkley, best known for his pitch-perfect television cameos as a shamelessly sycophantic, celebrity-smitten history professor—SCRAPBOOK readers will doubtless remember Brinkley's hilarious performance as "the candidate's biographer" on last season's since-cancelled *John Kerry Show*—may finally be getting the A-list entertainment-industry treatment he's long deserved.

Brinkley's standing among his fellow thespians has never been in question, of course: Despite his relative obscurity in a less-prestigious medium, even the biggest of big-screen personalities clearly consider him one of their own—both socially and professionally. It was just a couple months ago, after all, that New Orleans *Times-Picayune* society columnist Chris Rose reported the following Tinseltown-on-Location-in-the-Big-Easy megascoop: "Saturday night, [Sean] Penn showed up at The Columns on the Avenue, taking a front porch table with a group of guys that included local historian Doug Brinkley, whose connection to Penn is that they're mutual friends of Hunter S. Thompson." And there "with Brinkley and Penn was [Jude] Law, whose mere physical proximity has caused bronze nudes to melt into smoldering puddles of molten lava."

But Mr. Brinkley, thank goodness, appears to have survived that evening in solid form.

Item the first: Brinkley has lately inked a development deal to become the featured star of a new, independently produced reality show set in New Orleans. Its creators haven't yet settled on a name for the program, but Brinkley will play the role of "director" at the "Theodore Roosevelt Center for American Civilization"—described in the show's promotional materials as a division of "Tulane University." We're laughing already.

Item the second: Even as he pursues this unprecedented opportunity, Brinkley apparently remains contractually free—and eager—to continue accepting a full range of walk-on roles with established productions back in Los Angeles. As recently as February 27, for example, Brinkley did a show-stealing turn on page two of the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, a revered if low-rated Sunday morning institution in Movieland. The gag for Brinkley's episode involved the *Times* asking his character, a "distinguished professor of history," to review a new oral-history biography of a certain celebrity whom the professor considers a personal friend. And the professor, desperate to further ingratiate himself with his marquee-named pal, decides to accept the assignment, notwithstanding his conflict of interest, which he nowhere acknowledges in the review he winds up turning in.

The result? A direct hit to the funny bone! C'mon: Who else but Douglas Brinkley could pull off side-splitters like these:

"Several things become clear when reading Richard T. Kelly's *Sean Penn: His Life and Times*. . . . Unflinching in his artistic integrity, Penn over the last two decades has forged fast friendships with such gifted actors as Jack Nicholson [etc., etc.]. . . . Penn championed the underdog even at an early age, growing up in the fashionable communities of Woodland Hills, Sherman Oaks, and Malibu. . . . A staunch advocate of prison reform, Penn would have become a civil rights lawyer if he hadn't been an actor. . . . And one thing is for certain. Whether he is acting, directing, writing, or dissenting, he will do it his way, with the least amount of negotiation possible." And so forth.

Here, as always, Brinkley's depiction of craven, semi-dishonest, pseudo-scholarly toadyism is so riotously funny and compelling that one almost forgets it's only comedy—that he isn't *really* a "distinguished professor of history" at all. ♦

## Pray for Nuclear Rain

THE SCRAPBOOK doesn't make a habit of watching *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* on Comedy Central. And neither (so he claims, at least) does the *Wall Street Journal*'s James Taranto. But he does admit to having watched—and recorded—last Tuesday's edition. Which is how Taranto was then able to produce for *OpinionJournal.com* his truly amazing transcription of Stewart's interview with Nancy Soderberg.

(Ms. Soderberg was a high-level National Security Council aide and U.N. ambassador during the Clinton years. Mr. Stewart, needless to say, is the leading critic of contemporary American political discourse. Except when people criticize him back, at which point he becomes "just a comedian," like Douglas Brinkley.)

Anyhow, Soderberg was on the *Daily Show* to promote her new book, *The Superpower Myth: The Use and Misuse of American Might*—the "misuse" she originally had in mind being . . . well, pretty much everything that George W. Bush has done since Soderberg's party lost control of the White House. It seems that Jon Stewart would very much prefer to think that Soderberg's book has the Bush people dead to rights.

But it also seems that neither Stewart—nor Soderberg, for that matter—is



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any longer all that confident that Bush isn't actually a genius, instead. Relevant excerpts follow:

SODERBERG: I think that there is also going on in the Middle East peace process—[the Bush administration] may well have a chance to do a historic deal with the Palestinians and the Israelis. These guys could really pull off a whole . . .

STEWART: This could be unbelievable!

SODERBERG: . . . series of Nobel Peace Prizes here, which—it may well work. I think that, um, it's . . .

STEWART: [Burying his head in his hands.] Oh, my God! He's got, you know, here's . . .

SODERBERG: It's scary for Democrats, I have to say.

STEWART: He's gonna be a great—pretty soon, Republicans are gonna be like, "Reagan was nothing compared to this guy." Like, my kid's gonna go to a high school named after him, I just know it.

SODERBERG: Well, there's still Iran and North Korea, don't forget. There's hope for the rest of us.

STEWART: [Crossing his fingers.] Iran and North Korea, that's true, that is true. ♦

## Saddam's Two Favorite Countries

No surprises, here. *Agence France Presse* reports that Jordan-based lawyer Ziad Khassawneh—one of the defense attorneys who've been recruited to defend Saddam Hussein against prospective criminal prosecution by the new Iraqi government—made a goodwill mission to Tokyo last week, during which he promised his hosts that Saddam will be "very happy" should Japan decide to withdraw its forces from the U.S.-led military coalition that deposed him.

Meantime, though, Saddam will remain happiest of all with two other, specific countries located somewhat further to the west.

"Saddam last met his defense counsel in December and conveyed his greetings to all 'free people' of the world 'and especially to France and Germany,' which were staunch opponents of the war that toppled him, Khassawneh said." ♦

## Comings and Goings

With this issue, THE WEEKLY STANDARD is pleased to welcome aboard our new Books & Arts editor, Philip Terzian, whose occasional contributions have graced these pages since as far back as 1996, and whose multiple talents—developed over a long and distinguished career as a newspaperman and critic—we're now lucky enough to take advantage of full time. Mr. Terzian inherits his new command from Joseph Bottum, whose masterly guidance of our back pages over the past seven years we gratefully acknowledge. Mr. Bottum now leaves Washington, where we will miss him, for New York, where he will become editor of the journal *First Things*. ♦



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# Casual

## A Secret Vice

In the early twentieth-century medical encyclopedias, the article "The Secret Vice" was about onanism. Inevitably accompanying the article was a photograph of a practitioner, a young man, poor fellow, who looked to be in the moral equivalent of advanced leprosy.

I have a secret vice of my own to report, and this is listening to talk-radio shows devoted to sports. I practice this vice only in my car, when alone, and until now nobody knew about it. Why, I have often asked myself, do I degrade myself in this way? For my own intellectual health, I've got to stop, and stop soon.

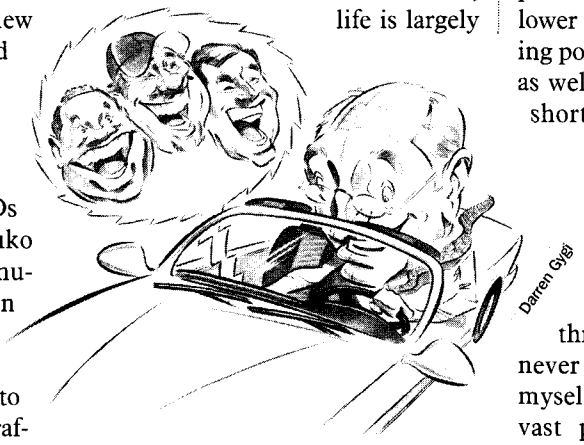
In the console of my car are CDs of Dvorak string quartets, Mitsuko Uchida's sublime rendition of Schubert piano music, Sarah Vaughan singing old standards, and Joel Grey doing the subtler show tunes. This ought to be sufficient to keep me from the tedium of city traffic. Not so, it turns out.

Instead I prefer to hear argumentative men gas away on the exploits of other large and sometimes bulky men hitting, kicking, and stuffing balls of various shapes and sizes over different shaped fields and courts. I, who during the evening might be reading a biography of Dante (Alighieri, not Culpepper), in my car listen to the thin iconoclasm and even thinner commonsense observations of ex-jocks and newspaper sportswriters.

Chicago has two stations devoted to sports talk. Some of the men employed by these stations come on as very moral and perpetually ticked off; others are worldly and calmly cynical; everyone is terribly knowing.

Part of the attraction is what I believe the feminists would call "masculinist." One of the shows I listen to advertises itself as America's last corner bar. It has three so-called hosts: a pugnacious Irishman, a not especially brainy Jewish guy, and a retired Green Bay Packers defensive lineman. All are happily overweight. They eat unhealthily and are pleased about it; for them women are purely sexual objects, except wives, who are figures of mild terror that exist to raise one's children and be outfoxed.

For your sports-talk show man, host or audience, life is largely lived in front of the television set, watching two, three games a night, and uncounted ones on lost weekends. No war on terror is going on, the state of the economy is a matter of little concern, gay marriage is a subject good chiefly for raw jokes. The only questions worth pondering are how corrupt are college sports, was Notre Dame right to fire its football coach, and was Sammy Sosa on steroids the two years he hit more than 60 homers.


Darren Gygi

Much of the content of sports-talk radio is about old, obviously unsettleable arguments: Who are the five all-time best quarterbacks in the NFL? How does Barry Bonds's record stack up against Babe Ruth's? Are all basketball games really won on defense? Gruff opinionation usually wins the day: "Whaddya mean you'd rather have Peyton Manning than Brett Favre in the red zone late in the fourth quarter in a playoff game? Look at the numbers, for God's sake." Ephemeral scandals—supplied in recent months by Jason Giambi and Kobe Bryant—and trades, potential and real, fill the day's chitchat. The same few bones are gnawed continuously.

Occasionally I learn a little something. When the White Sox traded a power-hitting outfielder named Carlos Lee, I wondered why. On one of these shows I learned that, though Lee hit more than 30 home runs and batted around .300, and had an error-free year in left field, he also hit 50 points lower with men in scoring position, and more than 100 points lower with two outs with men in scoring position, and the reason he fielded as well as he did is that he played a short left field and the balls that sailed over his head did not count as errors.

These shows are all the radio equivalent of interactive—they allow the audience to put in its rusty two cents through call-ins, emails, faxes. I've never called in or sent an email myself. Even though I've wasted a vast portion of my life watching games, I find I have no strikingly original insight into any of them. I could, I suppose, call in politely to point out that the word "fortuitous" doesn't mean fortunate or that "differential" has more properly to do with equations and with engines than the differences in scores. Somehow, though, I feel my pedantry would not be well received.

My mind would be so much better engaged listening to serious music. Shoot the Schubert to me, Hubert, should be my byword, or Hit me with more Dvorak, Jack. Yet I listen to the trivia-meisters of sports-talk radio instead. All I can do is admit to the vice, and, in the manner of Alcoholics Anonymous, hope, now that my vice isn't secret any more, that I've taken a first step toward recovery.

**Joseph Epstein**



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## Stockholm Syndrome

I ORIGINALLY HAIL FROM SWEDEN, but am currently teaching economics and European studies at Skidmore College. I found Christopher Caldwell's "A Swedish Dilemma" (Feb. 28) interesting. I hope it will open American eyes to a problem that is visible all across Europe.

Although Sweden is on the extreme end of things, I do not think Caldwell's article gives a full account of the dire situation there. Social tensions have reached alarming levels, symbolized in part by skyrocketing crime rates. Recent studies in Stockholm show that of all rapes reported to police, only one in five are investigated and only 5 percent of the cases reported lead to the prosecution of a suspect. It is estimated that violent crime is rising by 25 percent annually, and over the first half of 2004 the murder rate rose by 40 percent.

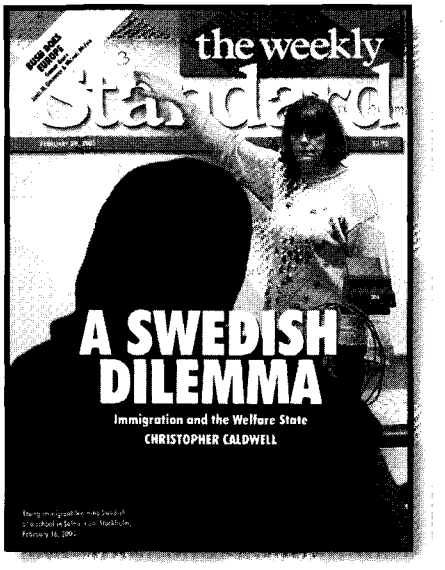
Political extremism is also on the rise. About five years ago, an estimate by anti-racist groups indicated that Sweden had more active members of Nazi movements than its neighbors, adjusted for population. Hate-crime rates are several times higher than in America. Nazis have killed and have tried to kill journalists. Recently a long-time Nazi leader was arrested and charged with trying to build an armed political movement. In a different case, a group of nationalists were rounded up for inciting and planning an "armed revolution in the welfare state," as they called it. Nationalist-racist parties are represented in almost two dozen city councils. I fear they will make a successful bid for seats in the national parliament next year. These parties are far more extreme and dangerous than, say, Denmark's right-wing Dansk Folkeparti (Danish People's party).

Sweden's Nazis and nationalists are preying on stress and frustration among the middle class. Serious economic hardship—with extremely high tax rates—has forced most Swedish families into welfare dependency and paycheck-to-paycheck living. Now that the costly welfare system is being rolled back but taxes are being kept at record levels, their situation is getting desperate.

Contrary to what Caldwell indicates, the Swedish welfare state has been on a retreat for roughly two decades. Sweden now offers among the harshest welfare programs in the European Union. Health care is in a deplorable state of deterioration, with quality problems and waiting queues far worse than in (for example) Canada. Functional illiteracy is steadily on the rise, as are taxes.

As if all this were not enough, Sweden also suffers from widespread political corruption. The Social Democrats—who practically run the country as a one-party state—are at the root of this, which means the problem is getting worse, not better. Nationalist-racist parties are likely to profit widely from corruption in the near future. When they do, it will make an already shaky democracy even shakier.

SVEN R. LARSON
*Saratoga Springs, NY*




## Mind the Golden Door

TAMAR JACOBY falsely presents President Bush's guest worker program as an alternative to an increase in the Border Patrol, sweeps of workplaces and neighborhoods, large-scale deportations, and enhanced identification systems ("Law and Borders," Feb. 28). But raising the legal quota on foreigners permitted to work in the United States will not "solve" the illegal immigration problem unless it is coupled with greatly enhanced border security.

Not every illegal immigrant is a good-hearted worker who deserves a chance to get right with the law. The rising number of illegals on welfare and in prison indicates that more immigrants are coming into the country than even our robust economy can absorb. People come across the border in search of better conditions, but not always in search of honest work. They come because living in America is better than staying at home, even if poor or unemployed. Criminals and terrorists come for reasons of their own, and will prefer to stay in the shadows.

There will have to be a vigorous effort to round up and deport those who are not eligible for the guest worker program or who, for whatever reason, do not come forward. If there are 10 to 12 million illegal immigrants living in America, as Jacoby says, even a small percentage of such a large number will pose significant enforcement problems. There will still be a lucrative market for false documents, smugglers, and gang recruiters. Amnesties always increase the flood of migrants, unless blocked by expanded border and internal police efforts. No guest worker program can be said to have restored the integrity of our immigration system and the rule of law if it is still possible to enter the country and operate outside of the system.

From a political perspective, Bush's proposal cannot be sold to the public or Congress without being linked to greatly improved border security. Jacoby makes no proposals—nor has the Bush administration—that would actually close the southern border to illegal entry. Without action on the border, conservatives should reject the Bush proposal as incomplete and unworkable.

WILLIAM R. HAWKINS
*U.S. Business and Industry Council*
*Washington, DC*

TAMAR JACOBY misses three of the main reasons why stopping illegal immigration is necessary and overdue.

First, I have been a law enforcement officer for 27 years in a city that is very affected by illegal immigration. We have a day-laborer center that used to support 50 to 60 day laborers (illegal aliens) looking for day jobs. The center now routinely has over 140 laborers trying to find work, even though only 60 to 70 will get hired on a daily basis.

Because the chance for daily work is only about 50 percent, many more illegal aliens prefer to stand on the sidewalks in



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and around the Home Depot here in town. They stand on people's lawns, they stand in front of other business, they litter, they urinate, and they defecate. Their sheer numbers intimidate single women and children into avoiding the area. There are simply more illegal aliens than there are jobs available. Even though I work in southern California, I have gotten calls from Florida, Georgia, and West Virginia in the last three months because cities there are all having similar problems. There are just more low-tech workers than our economy can support.

Second, the drive by conservatives to bring in more cheap labor for business does the poor in our own country a disservice. I know of U.S.-born Mexican Americans working as maids in hotels who are afraid to ask for a raise or benefits because they are scared they will be replaced by illegal aliens. Most fast food restaurants are now staffed by illegal aliens, who take jobs that used to go to our teenagers. More and more entry-level jobs are being taken over by the people coming here "just to feed their families."

But what about Americans? They want to feed their families, too. By supporting the influx of an ever-increasing supply of cheap labor, conservatives condemn America's poor to staying poor. This is hardly "compassionate."

Third, we have no idea who these people coming over the border are. They have no identification, so we cannot run their records. Some of the "day laborers" standing on our sidewalks are convicted of very serious crimes on an almost daily basis. Some might eventually be deported, but many will cross back over the border to confront us again and again.

Illegal immigration *is* illegal, and it has many consequences. These include classroom overcrowding, which the children of illegals make even worse, and the rising cost of medical care, which is exacerbated by millions of illegal aliens who have no money but must be treated. We are all paying the staggering costs of illegal immigration . . . for what? So we can provide American businesses with cheap labor? How shortsighted.

MARK HANSEN
*California*

**TAMAR JACOBY RESPONDS:** William R. Hawkins and Mark Hansen are dead wrong about immigrants' impact on the U.S. economy. Far from a permanent underclass "on welfare and in prison," undocumented male immigrants are more than twice as likely as comparably educated native-born men to be participating in the labor force—an astonishing 96 percent of them are either working or between jobs. As illegal immigrants, they aren't eligible for welfare. And studies show that the foreign-born commit roughly the same amount of crime as other people with similar incomes and education levels—if anything, slightly less. As for Hansen's claims about "staggering costs," economists find cities and states with high numbers of immigrants have considerably healthier economies than cities and states with few foreign workers. Wages are higher, unemployment is lower, and incomes rise faster. Why? Because immigrants help grow a regional economy, benefiting not just the businesses where they work—Is there anyone left in America who thinks only greedy businesses gain from economic growth?—but also local retail services and everyone who uses the amenities made possible by the expanded tax base.

Of course, both Hawkins and Hansen are right: The status quo is unacceptable—that was one of the main points of my article. Insecure borders, widespread disrespect for the law, chaotic hiring practices that undermine the quality of life in our communities—if this is the price of immigration, it's too high a price to pay. But it needn't be the price. As President Bush understands, the solution is to acknowledge our labor needs and the immigrant flow they generate and then—once we've taken our heads out of the sand—find ways to manage the consequences of the influx. Once we've created legal channels for the foreign workers we need—and only then—we'll be able to take control of the border and defend ourselves against would-be terrorists. Once they have legal standing, even the newest arrivals will find it easier to bargain for decent wages, much reducing the likelihood they will undercut U.S.-born workers. And once we own up to the impromptu hiring that is so beneficial for our communities—one of the great advantages of immigrant laborers is that they are so flexible and responsive to market conditions—we can create more orderly procedures, including hiring halls, to minimize its adverse effects.

Hawkins and Hansen are hung up on the symptoms of an outmoded, inadequate immigration policy. What they don't see are the larger benefits of the immigrant influx—or the way we can turn it even more to our advantage with a more realistic approach.

## ERRATUM

IN CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL'S "A Swedish Dilemma" (Feb. 28), we wrote, "Danes under 25 who marry foreigners no longer have the right to bring their spouses into the country." That should have read, "Danes under 24 . . ."

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# They Shalt Not

The Supreme Court ought to uphold the several displays of the Ten Commandments on government property whose constitutionality it considered last week. But how might it do that?

If the Court had a sense of humor, perhaps it would sustain the displays (the cases are from Texas and Kentucky) by observing that the Decalogue is foreign law, and that foreign law is always good law, often even better than our own. Think of the opinion that could be crafted, perhaps by Justice Anthony Kennedy, who last week cited developments in foreign law in declaring that the Constitution condemns capital punishment for crimes committed by persons under 18. Kennedy could observe that the Decalogue was received on Mt. Sinai by one Moses, an Israelite from Egypt, and that it was originally written in Hebrew, and that it has been translated the world over, and that . . .

Of course, the Court isn't going to hand down any such opinion (though it would be interesting to see how it dealt with the part about the text coming from the finger of God). Instead it is going to produce a ruling that applies First Amendment jurisprudence. One trembles at the thought: No area of constitutional law is in a state of greater confusion.

Over the years, the Court has invented first this test, then that to determine whether government involvement with religion violates the First Amendment's ban on establishment. The Court has searched for illicit purposes and bad primary effects and excessive entanglements. It has asked whether government is endorsing religion such that non-adherents feel they are outsiders and adherents insiders. It has theorized that "a reasonable observer" can reliably tell us whether unconstitutional establishment has occurred. To make sure that government doesn't force people to support or participate in religion, the Court has asked whether even "peer pressure" might be unconstitutionally coercive.

The Court has used one test for one case, another test for another, and sometimes it has wearied of its tests and used none at all. In 1984, confronted with the question of whether chaplaincies in legislatures violate the First Amendment, the justices said they'd rather shelve their tests than strike down a practice dating to the very first Congress. So whatever has a long history that has "become part of the fabric of our society" and is a "tolerable acknowledgment of beliefs widely held among the people of this country" may well escape condemnation under the First Amendment—unless the Court decides otherwise.

Last year in the Pledge of Allegiance case (does "under God" violate the First Amendment?), Justice Sandra Day O'Connor proposed yet another test—a four-parter. Government may acknowledge religion so long as the policy or program or action at issue satisfies standards of "history and ubiquity," does not include worship or prayer, is "nonsectarian," and possesses "minimal religious content."

In last week's Ten Commandments case from Kentucky, the Court is being asked to apply this four-part test. Advocates out to prove that the display in one county courthouse has "minimal religious content" have counted the words it contains (not just in the Decalogue but also in the Star-Spangled Banner, the Mayflower Compact, the Bill of Rights, the Magna Carta, the National Motto in the Great Seal of the United States, and the Preamble to the Kentucky Constitution) and found that of the 8,462 words in the entire exhibit only 199 are in the Ten Commandments, and the words "God" and "Lord" occur only four times. To think that constitutional law might come to this.

The Court could usefully set aside its many tests and instead consider what various majorities have affirmed on no fewer than five occasions since 1952, to wit: "We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being." As such a people, Americans for more than two centuries have made that presupposition explicit in numerous ways that involve government. Think of the words "In God We Trust" on our coins or the aforementioned legislative chaplaincies. The Ten Commandments displays do the same thing—a point Justice Scalia was making, if clumsily, when he said during the argument in the Texas case that "government comes from God. That's what this case is about."

The question for the Court is whether the First Amendment really does prevent public displays that indicate what our institutions presuppose. One is hard pressed to discern in the original meaning of the religion clause a rule that says, "Thou shalt not." Which is why these displays of the Ten Commandments deserve to survive the Court's review.

*—Terry Eastland, for the Editors*



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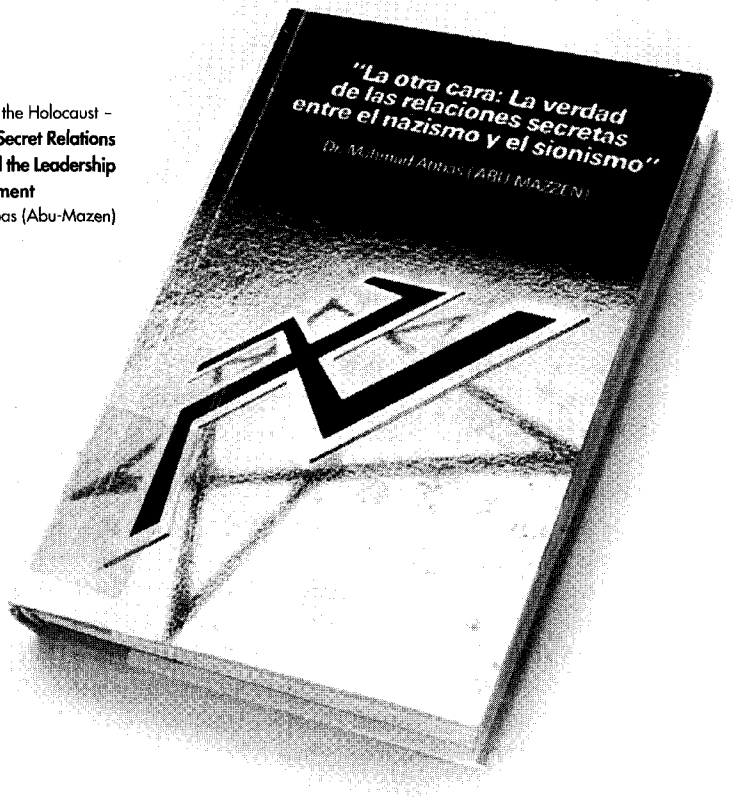
# Mr. President, don't give Holocaust denier and PLO chief Abbas $350 million until he fulfills his obligations.

# Let's go by the book.

Abbas' book denying the Holocaust - **The Other Side: The Secret Relations Between Nazism and the Leadership of the Zionist Movement**
By: Dr. Mahmoud Abbas (Abu-Mazen)
- Pub. 1984




## Abbas sounds no better today.

**Abbas on the future:**
"The small Jihad is over and the big Jihad has begun."- *Jerusalem Post, 1/11/05*

**Abbas on Israel:**
"The Zionist enemy" - *Associated Press, 1/4/05*

**Abbas on Arafat:**
"It is our duty to implement the principals of Yasser Arafat." - *Haaretz, 1/3/05*

**Abbas on terrorists:**
"These are the heroes that are fighting for freedom" - *Haaretz, 1/3/05*
"Israel calls them murderers, we call them strugglers" - *Jerusalem Post, 12/25/04*

**Abbas on suicide bombers:**
"Allah loves the martyr" - *Wall Street Journal, 1/5/05*

**Mahmoud Abbas, president of the Palestinian Authority, must publicly retract his Holocaust denial and apologize** as well as fulfill the Palestinian obligations under the 11-year old Oslo accords and the Road Map to **dismantle and disarm terror groups, close bomb factories, arrest terrorists and end incitement against Israel.**

Let's not make the same mistakes President Clinton made with Arafat. It was give, give, give - a billion dollars - with no accountability and nothing in return. **No US funds should be given to the Palestinians until Abbas fully complies with the Road Map.**

Far from being the great hope for peace in the Middle East, Abbas looks more like Arafat in a suit. He was Arafat's top deputy for 40 years. (We never would have accepted Saddam's top aide to be the next Prime Minister of Iraq.) He is co-founder of the terror group Fatah and a mastermind of the Munich and Ma'alot massacres.

President Bush has properly asserted that "we will not deal with Palestinian leaders compromised by terror". Sadly, Mr. Abbas is all of that and more.

And to add insult to injury, Abbas is a Holocaust denier who wrote both a PhD thesis and a book in the early 80's quoting *experts* and *historians* to *prove* that the number of Jews murdered was "only a few hundred thousand." That there may never have been gas chambers. And that "Zionists led a campaign of incitement against Jews to expand their mass extermination."

Please call your member of Congress at **1-202-224-3121** or e-mail them from the congressional website, **www.house.gov/writerep/** and demand that the US not send Abbas any of the $350 million, pledged by Bush, until he publicly apologizes for his holocaust denial and until the Palestinians first fulfill all of their 11 year-old obligations.

Only then will we know Abbas has truly turned over a new page.

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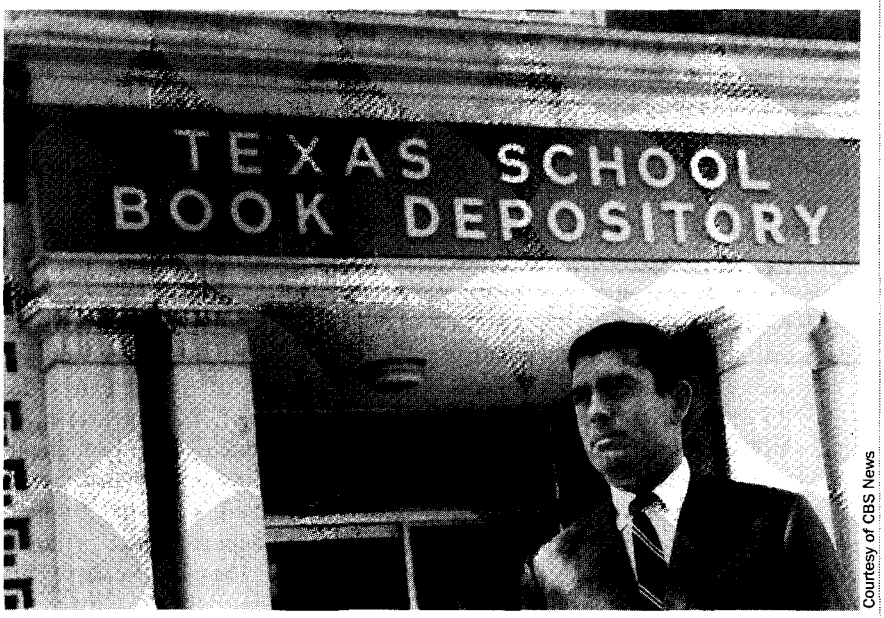
# Wrong from the Beginning

## Even in 1963, Dan Rather was a poor excuse for a newsman. BY PHILIP CHALK




Courtesy of CBS News

WHEN CBS ANNOUNCED that it will smile through the pain of Dan Rather's dying credibility with an hour-long retirement tribute in early March, the network released an image of a young Rather posing in front of the Texas School Book Depository, looking gravely into the distance. While a little nostalgia was understandable—what, no photo of Rather huddled over a fax machine last October?—CBS still managed to remind those who knew the anchor during his salad days in Texas how tendentious and unprincipled he was even then.

Eddie Barker, for one, remembers. The news director for CBS's radio and TV affiliates in Dallas at the time of President Kennedy's November 22, 1963, assassination, Barker is widely credited with first reporting on the air that the president was dead, having received word through a doctor acquaintance directly from the hospital ER. Rather, then based in Dallas as a reporter for CBS's national news broadcast and working out of Barker's newsroom, later took credit for the scoop, Barker says. The error is repeated in historical accounts often enough to annoy the now-retired Barker, though he says the falsehood was later acknowledged by Rather.

*The tale was perfect for the moment, reinforcing the notion among distant media elites that Dallas was a reactionary "City of Hate."*

It was a different lie—one delivered on national news, and at the expense of children—that caused Rather trouble at the time. As reporters from around the world descended on the Texas city, Rather went on the air with a local Methodist minister who made a stunning claim: Children at Dallas's University Park Elementary School had cheered when told of the president's death.

The tale was perfect for the moment, reinforcing the notion among distant media elites that Dallas was a reactionary "City of Hate." It slyly played to a local audience, too: The school named was in upper-income University Park, one of two adjacent municipal enclaves that shared a school district and a reputation for fiercely protected, lily-white privilege. Finally, for the ambitious Rather—a native Texan and then a Dallas resident—the account represented the very sort of revealing, local dirt that the throngs of out-of-town competitors would have to work far harder to get.

Except that it wasn't true, and Rather knew it, Barker says.

Approached earlier by the same minister with what was a second-hand account, Barker himself had run the story by the school's principal and some teachers, all of whom denied it outright. Because of the shooting, which took place at 12:30 P.M., the principal had decided to close the school early, though without telling the students why. The children at the school—including three of Barker's own—were merely happy to be going home early, he was told. There couldn't have been any spontaneous cheering at the news of Kennedy's murder, because no such news had been announced.

Undaunted, the dogged minister—"a very, very strong liberal and a very, very strong Kennedy supporter," Barker says—moved on to Rather.

*Philip Chalk, member of the University Park Elementary class of 1974, is production director at* THE WEEKLY STANDARD.



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"Rather came to me, and I said, 'My kids are in school there, and I checked it out, and there's not a darn thing to it,'" says Barker. "He said, 'Well, great—I'll just forget it.' But instead of forgetting it, he went out and did this gut job on Dallas and its conservatism," with the preacher's story at the center of his report.

With the discredited account likely to be challenged by the local affiliate's editors before being fed to New York, Rather sidestepped a customary film-editing session with Barker and arranged to file the report live instead, Barker says. "And so here's Dan with the preacher, telling this story about kids at UP cheering when told the president was dead."

Livid at being lied to, Barker laid into Rather as soon as he returned to the newsroom, expelling the reporter and all his national-news colleagues from the building on the spot. "I said 'Get the hell out of here—you and this whole damn bunch!'" he says.

Barker's local TV and radio crews scrambled to arrange on-air interviews with teachers to rebut the story, but the lie had already traveled halfway around the world and would become an enduring part of JFK assassination lore. In the meantime, CBS was threatening to pull its affiliation with the two local stations for having given Rather and his colleagues the boot.

"The next day I let him back in," Barker says. "But I wanted to make darn sure that he knew he couldn't pull that kind of crap with me."

While well-known in broadcast-news circles, the incident did nothing to slow Rather's rise; his Kennedy coverage was decisive in his eventual move up to CBS's New York headquarters. "You have to give him credit," says Barker. "He's a very aggressive guy."

Aggressive to a fault, as the ignominious end of his four-plus decades at CBS makes plain. As Barker himself—a CBS newsman for most of his career—says, "Anybody who followed CBS's coverage last year knows that they were doing a gut job on the president." ♦

# Brave New Academic Freedom

## Phi Beta Kappa goes to bat for Michael Moore.

**BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI**

IN 1993 THE SOCIOLOGIST and critic Edward Shils wrote an essay entitled "Do We Still Need Academic Freedom?" Shils's answer: No, we don't—at least not in its current incarnation. The good professor passed away in 1995, but if he were still with us, he might have found in last Tuesday's *Washington Post* additional evidence to support his thesis.

That morning, the Metro section gave prominent billing to a story headlined "Phi Beta Kappa Rejects GMU." Phi Beta Kappa is the United States's oldest, largest, and most venerable academic honor society. GMU is George Mason University, a public school in suburban Virginia, which, while large (it has 27,000 students), is not old. It became a four-year university in 1972.

Since then it has grown in size and in prestige. And in the fall of 2003, for the second time, its faculty applied to establish a chapter of the honor society on their campus. George Mason passed an initial test, then submitted a 177-page "detailed report" on October 1, 2004. Which is when, according to the *Post*, Phi Beta Kappa "promptly rejected" the application, "citing concerns about academic freedom." Specifically: Phi Beta Kappa was concerned that George Mason president Alan G. Merten had backed out of an agreement to pay filmmaker Michael Moore $35,000 to speak on campus.

Moore, famous auteur of the anti-Bush rant *Fahrenheit 9/11*, spent most of last fall barnstorming colleges in a 60-city, 20-state "Slacker Uprising Tour." The goal was to rouse young voters out of their historical complacency, thus ensuring a Kerry victory on November 2. As politics, the tour was a big, fat failure. But as economics—the economics of Moore's pocketbook, in particular—it was a bewildering success. The tour must have recouped its $500,000 budget within weeks. Moore drew huge crowds: 3,000 at Michigan State, 7,500 at "The Pit" in Albuquerque, 9,000 at the University of Arizona. And he drew huge fees: An appearance at Utah Valley State College brought in $50,500, or $500 more than the student government's annual budget. Moore didn't appear at the University of Nebraska Lincoln because his $40,000 request (plus an undisclosed "security fee") probably would have bankrupted the school's University Program Council.

By those standards, George Mason was to have gotten off easy: Moore's asking price was a measly $35,000. But after Republican legislators in the Virginia statehouse got wind of the arrangement and questioned whether financing an appearance by Moore at a public university several days before a national election was an appropriate use of state funds, Mason's president decided the $35,000 wasn't worth it.

So George Mason students were denied the opportunity to listen to Moore preach his "slacker creed," which goes: "Sleep 'til noon, drink beer, vote Kerry November 2." They were denied the chance to win bags of Tostitos tortilla chips, boxes of Ramen noodles, and pairs of Hanes briefs, all of which Moore regularly distributed to students on his tour in

*Matthew Continetti is a reporter at* THE WEEKLY STANDARD.



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exchange for pledges to vote. They weren't even able to watch Moore reclining in a chair onstage as deleted scenes from *Fahrenheit 9/11* played onscreen.

What George Mason students got instead was a controversy. On October 1, the day President Merten's decision was reported in the *Washington Post*, the general secretary of the American Association of University Professors, Roger Bowen, sent a letter to George Mason defending Moore—a college dropout—and extending the "principles of academic freedom" to outside speakers with no academic affiliation. Here is what Bowen wrote:

> The AAUP has long held that an institution of higher learning should be free to invite or not invite whomever it wishes to speak on its campus. Once an invitation has been extended, however, its withdrawal because of public displeasure with the speaker's views or status is inconsistent with the principle that a university is a place where all views can be heard and discussed.

Merten's decision, and Roger Bowen's response to it, became national news. Soon Phi Beta Kappa sent its own letter to George Mason asking about Moore. A flurry of correspondence ensued. On November 11, Marion Deshmukh, the art history professor in charge of GMU's application, received a final rejection from Phi Beta Kappa. "They didn't mention Michael Moore by name," Deshmukh said in her office the other day. "But my sense is that it was the *coup de grâce*."

To Michael Moore, the hullabaloo over his speaking fees was about free speech. He accused Republican legislators of conspiring against him. He told the *Washington Post* that he would show up at George Mason anyway, "in support of free speech and free expression." He hasn't.

Which is telling. Because after President Merten rescinded the initial $35,000 offer, he immediately extended *another* invitation to Moore to speak at a lower price. Peter Stearns, George Mason's provost, provided me with an email that faculty member Michael McDonald had sent him recently. "As you may recall, as adviser to the GMU College Democrats I worked to bring Michael Moore to George Mason after the initial offer to speak was taken back," McDonald wrote.

Stephen J. Boitano / Getty Images

> I worked . . . to negotiate with Michael Moore's agent a mutually agreeable speaking arrangement. Michael Moore would have in all likelihood spoken at GMU's Patriot Center, except that we were told by his agent that he had contracted the flu and decided that his reconfigured schedule prevented him from coming to Virginia, which was not as high a priority as other battleground states. The arrangements had been made with the support of the university; it was Michael Moore's decision not to speak at GMU.

For its part, Phi Beta Kappa won't comment on the application process. "It's entirely confidential," Phi Beta Kappa secretary John Churchill said last week. George Mason personnel, on the other hand, are more than happy to comment. Marion Deshmukh read me a letter she and other George Mason professors who are Phi Beta Kappa members had sent the honor society. "We firmly believe that PBK would be hard pressed to find any faculty members or students who doubt they had and still have academic freedom," they wrote. Over a month later, Deshmukh received a letter from Phi Beta Kappa stating its decision was final.

Provost Stearns says George Mason will reapply to Phi Beta Kappa in 2006. In the meantime, those in charge of the school's application might want to reread Shils's essay. In it, he defines academic freedom as "the freedom to do academic things, to express beliefs which have been arrived at by the prolonged study of nature, human beings, and societies, and of the best works of art, literature, etc., created by human beings, and by the reasoned analysis of the results of those prolonged and intensive studies." Unfortunately, Shils writes, this definition of academic freedom no longer applies. Academic freedom "has become part of the more general right of the freedom of expression," he writes. "Expression"—and here Shils anticipates Michael Moore—"is not confined to the expression of reasoned and logically and empirically supported statements; it now pretty much extends to the expression of any desire, any sentiment, any impulse."

Actually, the Phi Beta Kappa Council that rejected George Mason's application might want to reread Shils's essay, too. It won't be hard for them to find a copy. It was published in the *American Scholar*—the society's in-house journal. ♦



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# The Road from Damascus

## Will the Cedar Revolution spill over into Syria?

**BY MARC GINSBERG**

"WE ASK ALMIGHTY GOD to divide Syria into hundreds of pieces so that the world at large may rest in peace." So prayed a Lebanese military officer quoted in the *Voice of Hope*, the mouthpiece of the pro-Israeli Southern Lebanese Army, on July 30, 1980.

Twenty-five years later, Syria is still around, but looking more and more as though its president, the Levant's callow mischief-maker-in-chief, Bashar al-Assad, has stumbled into a fatal diplomatic vortex—one that could lead to the implosion of the last Baathist regime and the demise of a 24/7 state sponsor of terror. Here are some straws in the wind:

• France (the former colonial power in Lebanon) and the United States are stepping up a diplomatic drive to force Syria's 12,000-man occupation force and Gestapo-like secret intelligence service out of Lebanon, which Syria has occupied since 1976.

• Although proof remains lacking, there is widespread belief (shared by many in Washington) that Syria was behind the February 14 assassination of popular former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri, along with 16 others—the outrage that has left Lebanon's normally disparate ethnic groups united against Syria.

• The Syrian-installed puppet government headed by Omar Karami submitted its resignation on February 28, as the popular Cedar Revolution in the streets of Beirut daily picked up steam.

• Israel and the United States have irrefutable proof that the Damascus-based Palestine Islamic Jihad was responsible for the suicide bomb detonated at the Stage Nightclub on Tel Aviv's fashionable waterfront two weeks ago.

• General John Abizaid bluntly stated last week before a congressional panel that Syria remains "unhelpful" to Iraq in its efforts to prevent cross-border support for insurgents.

In a desperate bid to staunch the bleeding and salvage his ruling House of Assad, the Syrian president high-tailed it last week to Saudi Arabia to shore up fraternal Arab support. But the effort failed, and only fellow terror-sponsor Iran has rallied to Assad's side with a pledge of allegiance.

No one knows whether Assad can jettison enough ballast to survive. The air is pregnant with change, but the House of Assad has proven its ruthless resilience before. How Assad manages the fallout from the Cedar Revolution could determine whether the minority Alawites in Damascus survive a crisis of Syria's own making.

Alibis and motives abound. But the ten-foot-deep crater at the site where Rafik Hariri's motorcade was ambushed has all the hallmarks of a plot hatched by Syria's intelligence operatives—possibly without the knowledge of Assad himself.

Hariri had earned the standing of a revered Lebanese patriot. It was he who, after a decades-long civil war, cajoled his countrymen into putting aside their differences and rebuilding their shattered nation. He persuaded them that Lebanon could become again a shining jewel in an otherwise turbulent Middle East.

Last year, Hariri resigned as prime minister to protest the reappointment of Syrian-puppet president Emile Lahoud. But Hariri was plotting a comeback. He and Druze chieftain Walid Jumblatt and other anti-Syrian political leaders were planning to form a new, more potent parliamentary opposition to the Syrian-backed government.

Meeting at Beirut's fashionable Bristol Hotel in October 2004, Christian allies of Hariri and Jumblatt began preparing a manifesto of sorts that would compel reforms and force Syria out of Lebanon once and for all by overturning all laws and treaties legitimating Syria's presence. Damascus understood only too well the implications of these gatherings and of the unprecedented anti-Syrian Sunni-Christian-Druze alliance that was emerging.

Long chafing under the illegal Syrian occupation, Lebanese civil society has been energized by Hariri's assassination as by no other event. Hundreds of thousands of flag-waving protesters have encamped in Martyrs' Square astride the site where the motorcade was attacked. Day and night their numbers have grown. They are emboldened by the courage of their Iraqi brethren, by the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, and by the resignation of the Karami government.

What the Lebanese want is not only an end to the Syrian occupation, but a sensible electoral law, clean parliamentary elections in May, an international investigation into Hariri's murder, and a stop to Syria's meddling in their country's internal affairs. They have a steep road to climb, steeper than that of their fellow protesters in Kiev. The obstacles to a viable Lebanese democracy include a historical proclivity to place religious differences above national unity; the presence of a fifth column of Shiite political par-

*Marc Ginsberg is a former U.S. ambassador to Morocco and senior vice president for APCO Worldwide.*



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ties backed up by formidable militias (Hezbollah and Amal) which oppose a break with Syria and Iran; and Syria's historical claim to Lebanon as an integral part of a Greater Syria.

Should the U.S.-backed Cedar Revolution succeed in securing the total expulsion of Syrian troops and agents from Lebanon, it would constitute a triumph for the winds of democratic change now sweeping the region. If managed thoughtfully, it could inspire Syria's own democratic movement.

But such triumph would also trigger inevitable dangers. Lebanon's liberation from Syria might increase the already sizable political influence of Hezbollah and its principal patron, Iran. Hezbollah opposes the creation of a pro-Western, democratic government in Lebanon, and its opposition could produce the very instability that Syria's expulsion was meant to prevent. Paris and Washington seriously differ on the danger Hezbollah poses.

Then, too, even a humiliated Syria would retain the power to interfere in Lebanon's affairs. Assassinations, disappearances, and other underhanded retaliation against democratic activists would become the norm unless the Syrian-Lebanese border were sealed—a highly unlikely event. In addition to which, Syria and Iran, fearing a pro-Western democratic government in Beirut, might order Hezbollah to launch cross-border attacks against Israel, throwing the region into further turmoil.

From a strategic perspective, a democratic, stable Lebanon is indeed a worthy goal—but less urgent than success in Iraq, which requires quashing once and for all Syria's support for the insurgents. However desirable Assad's fall may be, it has the potential to produce in Syria the same type of chaos that Saddam's fall produced in Iraq. Lessons learned from the mayhem in post-Saddam Iraq compel Washington to weigh carefully whether, for now, a defanged Assad regime might be preferable to a Baathist implosion. We may have to settle for the lesser of two evils.

In 1958, President Eisenhower dispatched a Marine expeditionary force to the beaches of Beirut to help prevent Damascus from absorbing Lebanon into Syria's new union with Egypt. In 1983, President Reagan once again dispatched U.S. troops to Lebanon, as part of a multinational peacekeeping force to restore order in a country occupied since 1976 by Syrian "peacekeepers"—only to withdraw them after the suicide bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks killed 243 Americans. Neither intervention produced either stability in Lebanon or the expulsion of Syria.

Whether or not the Lebanese people finally achieve their freedom, Syria will remain a national security quandary for the Bush administration. Since the invasion and occupation of Iraq, Damascus has curiously escaped any behavior-modifying punishment for its overt support of the Iraqi insurgency. Syria's own quandary in Lebanon obliges the White House to refocus its energies and present Damascus with a stark choice backed up by a plan of action: Either seal your border with Iraq, end your support for Hezbollah and other Palestinian terrorist groups, dismantle your WMD, and cooperate with the new Iraqi government, or you will suffer even greater international isolation and multilateral economic sanctions than you do now—and possible military retaliation.

Syria's paleo-Baathists rule by the law of the jungle. They are masters of the diplomatic bone toss to ensure the regime survives at any cost. In the four years the younger Assad has been president, he (or those of his father's cronies who really run the place) has, by his strategic miscalculations and isolation, put the regime in jeopardy. "Baby Doc" Assad has been a convenient figurehead for the Baathists. Given Syria's bloody history of military coups, however, Assad may soon be jettisoned if the regime's stakeholders believe his fall will buy them time. ♦


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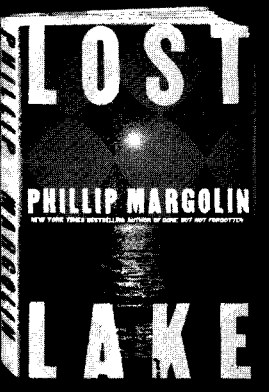


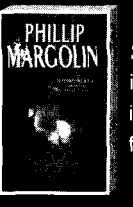


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# Vote Like an Egyptian?

## President Mubarak catches the democratic wave.

**BY STEPHEN F. HAYES**

Hosni Mubarak

AP Photo / Lefteris Pitarakis

"IT'S A DEMOCRATIC electric shock," proclaimed Karam Gabr, an editor of *Rose al-Yousuf*, a weekly political magazine in Egypt. The jolt came in a speech given by Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak on February 26.

"The election of a president will be through direct, secret balloting, giving the chance for political parties to run for the presidential elections and providing guarantees that allow more than one candidate for the people to choose among them with their own will," he said. "If it happens, it would be the first time in the political history of Egypt that a chance is given to somebody who is capable of shouldering the responsibility to protect the people's achievements and future security, to come forward. I took the reins of this initiative in order to start a new era."

*Stephen F. Hayes is a staff writer at* THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

*Al Ahram*, a newspaper closely aligned with Mubarak's government, touted the speech. The headline, in red ink for the first time, blared: "Egypt Starts a New Era on the Path of Reforms." An analysis in *Al Ahram Weekly* declared, "Mubarak's statement should be seen as nothing short of a declaration of a second republic."

It was certainly a dramatic reversal. Mubarak has long downplayed talk of meaningful political and constitutional reform. And yet his speech and the historic developments that it could portend were eclipsed almost immediately by coverage of the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon. It's a pretty good week for human freedom when the announcement of multi-party elections in Egypt is the second biggest story.

In many respects, Egypt provides a better test case of the Bush administration's commitment to democracy in the region. To encourage change in Lebanon requires the administration to confront Syria publicly and forcefully, which it is inclined to do anyway for a number of reasons. After all, Syria continues to support terrorist groups, and Bush administration officials are convinced that Damascus was behind the February 14 assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri and the February 24 suicide bombing in Tel Aviv. When CENTCOM published a new version of its Iraq Most Wanted list on February 11, seven of the 28 men listed were said to be "hiding in Syria." Confronting Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria was unavoidable and probably overdue.

Egypt is considerably more complicated. Mubarak has long been considered a U.S. ally. Successive administrations have willingly overlooked human rights abuses there in the name of regional stability. To further the same, both Democratic and Republican administrations have given Mubarak's regime vast sums of taxpayer money to prop up a stagnant, quasi-socialist economy that has been crumbling for decades.

Saad Eddin Ibrahim, an Egyptian sociologist and democracy advocate, says Mubarak's regime has successfully played three cards to keep Washington as its benefactor. "First, the Egyptian regime claims that the Islamists will win if we democratize. Second, it's a trade-off—Egyptian aid for Mubarak's help with the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. And third, economic liberalization is a priority—we must have economic liberalization before political reform." Ibrahim calls these "bluffs," but they were enough for Americans to continue their wink-and-nod diplomacy with Mubarak. "No other dictator has received more American support," Ibrahim adds.

All the while, Mubarak has ruled under the emergency law in place since the assassination of his predecessor, Anwar Sadat, in 1981. Elections in Egypt have been a joke. The presidency is decided every six years in a national referendum—with the candidate (singular) chosen by Mubarak's ruling National Democratic party and voters given a "yes" or "no" option. Ibrahim was jailed for 14 months after



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threatening to monitor the 2000 parliamentary elections. His case drew international attention and even protests from the United States. But U.S. aid kept flowing—reaching some $2 billion a year.

On January 20, Bush delivered his second inaugural address. "It is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world," he declared. In a speech on January 29, Mubarak rejected as "futile" calls from the Egyptian opposition to amend the constitution to allow multi-party, competitive elections. On the same day, Egyptian authorities arrested Ayman Nour, a colleague of Ibrahim's and the leader of the new Al Ghad (Tomorrow) party.

Mubarak's timing was not good. The following day, nearly nine million Iraqis braved attacks to vote in their historic elections. And on January 31, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher expressed "concern" about Nour's detention and his health. "He is one of Egypt's most prominent opposition leaders," said Boucher, "and the arrest, in our mind, raises questions about the outlook for democratic process in Egypt."

In his State of the Union speech on February 2, Bush shined a spotlight on Egypt. "The great and proud nation of Egypt, which showed the way toward peace in the Middle East, can now show the way toward democracy in the Middle East." (The line was recycled from Bush's speech at the National Endowment for Democracy on November 6, 2003. But its prominence in the State of the Union was noted in Egypt.)

On February 15, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice hosted Egyptian foreign minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit. At the press conference after their meeting, Rice said that she had expressed "strong concerns" about Ayman Nour's detention and noted that she addressed the subject in private "at some length."

But the news from the press conference came in Rice's answer to the final question. Rice had been scheduled to attend a meeting of Arab foreign ministers in Cairo on March 3. According to an account in *Al Ahram Weekly*, Gheit had repeatedly told reporters that Rice had no plans to skip the meeting. But a reporter from the weekly put the question directly to Rice: "Are you going to Cairo?" She responded: "Our delegation has not yet been decided, but I'll get back to you, how's that? "

Rice subsequently made clear that she would not attend the Cairo conference—which was to cover reform and liberalization in the region—so long as Nour was held. She did not attend.

Mubarak's pledge to reform has sparked new debate in Washington—both inside and outside of the Bush administration. What is the best way to ensure that Mubarak follows through on his high-minded rhetoric? Some officials favor a hands-off approach to Egyptian reform, reasoning that Mubarak will be more likely to make good on his promises if they are not seen as directed, or even inspired, by Washington. Others disagree, arguing that the U.S. government should push now to take advantage of the strong regional momentum for reform.

One Egyptian reform advocate argues that Bush should be outspoken about the need for change. He points to the widespread coverage of Bush's line on Egypt in the State of the Union. "He should say this in every speech. He can say it even after a Social Security speech, at the end." He begins mimicking Bush's voice. "Thank you very much. And, oh, by the way, 'The great and proud nation of Egypt, which showed the way toward peace in the Middle East, can now show the way toward democracy in the Middle East.' It gets attention. Al Jazeera will show it. Al Arabiya will show it."

Saad Ibrahim wants Bush to go further. "Condition your aid on a democratic timetable," he says. Ibrahim, who has put himself forward as a challenger to Mubarak in the September elections, has called for additional reforms, including a two-term limit on


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the presidency and the lifting of emergency law.

"The devil is in the details," cautions one Egyptian liberal. True enough. There is a long way to go. In a background briefing with reporters late last week, one senior Bush administration official signaled a willingness to hold Mubarak to his word and to press him for further reforms. "It's a very significant change. We don't view it as a symbolic step, we view it as a very important first step," said the official. "But there have to be follow-on steps to the announcement from President Mubarak."

It's worth noting just how far these discussions have come, particularly in light of recent criticism of the Bush administration and its alleged ex post facto justification for the war in Iraq. On October 3, 2002, as Congress debated the resolution for war in Iraq, the *New York Times* ran an article by Jane Perlez with this headline: "Egyptians See U.S. as Meddling in Their Politics." The article detailed the "tense times between Washington and Egypt, the largest Arab country and an important strategic ally."

And then there was this paragraph:

> Remarks by Mr. Bush's national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, that the Arab world would see a "march of democracy" after the fall of Mr. Hussein were dismissed by one senior official here as fantasy. "Cinderella," the official scoffed with a wave of the hand. "How nice of her," he said sarcastically. "Is she dreaming?"

Perhaps she was. But it's a dream apparently shared by Gabr, the editor who called the Mubarak speech an "electric shock." Last week Gabr wrote: "The winds of change blowing through Cairo could sweep away quite a few regimes in the region. They will be faced with the march of democracy in the Middle East."

Mubarak himself, on August 28, 2002, warned about the "repercussions" of a war to remove Saddam Hussein. "If you strike Iraq . . . not one Arab leader will be able to curb popular sentiments."

He may have been prophetic. ♦

# Party in Beirut—Pass It On

## The times they are a-changin'.

**BY WILL RASMUSSEN**

Patrick Baz / AFP / Getty Images

*Beirut*

AT 6:35 P.M. on Monday, February 28, Syrian-backed Lebanese premier Omar Karami told parliament that he would resign "so that the government does not become an obstacle to the good of the country." When Karami's words crackled over large screens and radios set up outside the parliament building, the response was electric.

A roar of applause erupted from 25,000 people. Amidst the hugging and tears, deafening chants of "Freedom, sovereignty, independence!" and "Syria out!" released decades of pent-up resentment against Lebanon's colonial masters into the Mediterranean breeze. "I can't explain the joy and the power I had at that moment," says 19-year-old Reem Sedek, an accounting student who's lived for the past two weeks in a tent in downtown Beirut with hundreds of other young people to protest the Syrian occupation.

Twenty-four-year-old Chirine Ammar's face lights up when she talks about that evening: "You know that sense of victory? That's what we felt. We won the first step on our way to freedom." What transpired in Beirut was a dramatic show of "people power" toppling a puppet regime most here had grown to hate. The 25,000 who turned out last week drew their support from transatlantic opposition to Syria, a sense that living under autocracy is no longer inevitable in the Middle East, and a healthy dose of anger. "After September 11, a new look started coming over the Middle East," says Rony Chidiac, 23, a student protester. "Regimes that depend on security and oppression are losing their power."

*Will Rasmussen is a reporter living in Beirut.*



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Until well into the early hours of the next morning, downtown Beirut was the scene of unadulterated exhilaration (a marked contrast to the days immediately after the assassination of Rafik Hariri, the anti-Syrian former prime minister, which ground a grief-stricken country to a halt for three days). Pickup trucks flying oversize Lebanese flags zigzagged through the closed-off downtown streets for hours with speakers blaring Lebanese nationalist ballads. The din was such that it's hard to imagine anyone in the nearby residential areas slept that night. Hundreds of Lebanese troops watched on the streetcorners, offering smiles to the joyous salutes of revelers.

Emile Lahoud, Syria's puppet president in Lebanon, had apparently reminded officers over the weekend that he was still in charge. But that wasn't apparent Monday. Lebanese troops at security cordons on major roads leading downtown quietly pointed protesters toward side streets, even though the demonstration was officially banned.

"You can tell from the looks in the soldiers' eyes, and from their smiles, their true stand," said Druze member of parliament and opposition leader Marwan Hamade, who had himself been targeted in a still-unsolved car bombing last October.

Lebanon's historically divided sects also made a show of unity—perhaps more apparent than real. Muslims hugged Christians, although few from Lebanon's majority Shia community turned out to protest Syria, a sponsor of the popular Shia-led Hezbollah resistance movement.

Nevertheless, a man parading through the crowd, holding aloft a cross in one hand and a Koran in the other, drew cheers. In Martyrs' Square, protesters were told not to wave pictures of sectarian leaders like Druze chieftain Walid Jumblatt or slain former Maronite leader Bashir Gemayel. Instead, thousands thrust red, white, and green Lebanese flags into the cool night breeze as they shouted anti-Syrian epithets, called for the resignation of Lahoud, and sang hoarse renditions of Lebanon's national anthem.

Some tried to quiet the din for a few minutes when Jumblatt appeared on a large TV screen rigged up in the square. "The people have won," Jumblatt proclaimed from his stronghold high in the Chouf mountains. Few could hear him, but they cheered his appearance anyway. The crowd particularly seemed to relish hurling insults at Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad. In years past, Lebanese could only whisper when talking about Syria. In conversation, they would use codewords like "Switzerland" instead of Syria and the English translation of Assad's name ("the lion") to avoid trouble from Syria's mukhabarat secret police, who roamed Lebanon's streets and who most assumed were too uneducated to understand the English reference to the Syrian leader.

In the wee hours of the next day, when the streets finally quieted, hundreds returned to the tent city they had built around Martyrs' Square in the city's downtown. Burlap tents, all flying the Lebanese colors, have lined the grassy area of the square for the past two weeks. One night, Walid Jumblatt's wife Nora slept alongside the students.

"Bashar al-Assad is not going to do what we want directly," says Chirine Ammar outside her tent. "We're going to stand up and we're going to fight." "We love this country," Reem Sedek says at a nearby tent. "There's no other country like Lebanon, and we're not leaving until Syria is gone." ♦

# The Moody Druze

## Walid Jumblatt knows which way the wind is blowing. BY LEE SMITH

*Moukhtara, Lebanon*

WALID JUMBLATT is trying to say something. Shortly before a meeting of Lebanese opposition figures, several hundred people are gathered in front of the Jumblatt family ancestral seat, a 19th-century palace and gardens in Moukhtara, a small village in Lebanon's Chouf Mountains, when the crowd breaks into the Lebanese national anthem. Jumblatt looks exasperated. A thin, stylishly dressed man in his mid-50s, Jumblatt has large, sad eyes and hunched shoulders that are expressive vehicles for articulating both his frequent wit and displeasure, and now it seems as though his body is letting out a small sigh of frustration. He is trying to say something, but with the singing, it now looks hopeless. So, after a few bars, Walid Bey, as he's frequently called in Lebanon, joins in.

*Lee Smith is writing a book on Arab culture.*

While former prime minister Rafik Hariri was the highest profile figure to oppose Lebanon's Syrian-backed government, Jumblatt, leader of the country's Druze community, representing about 10 percent of the population, was the first prominent non-Christian official to stand against Syria's Assad regime, which has occupied Lebanon for the last 29 years. And since the February 14 explosion that killed Hariri, Lebanon's most powerful Sunni politician, Jumblatt has become the international symbol of Lebanon's Cedar Revolution, with his widely quoted statement to the *Washington Post*'s David Ignatius comparing the regional effects of Iraq's elections to the fall of the Berlin Wall. It is an interesting turn of events for a man once allied closely with the Syrians, at least when the regime was headed by Bashar al-Assad's father, Hafez, the man who had Jumblatt's father, Kemal, assassinated in 1977.

"The Syrians thought that some of



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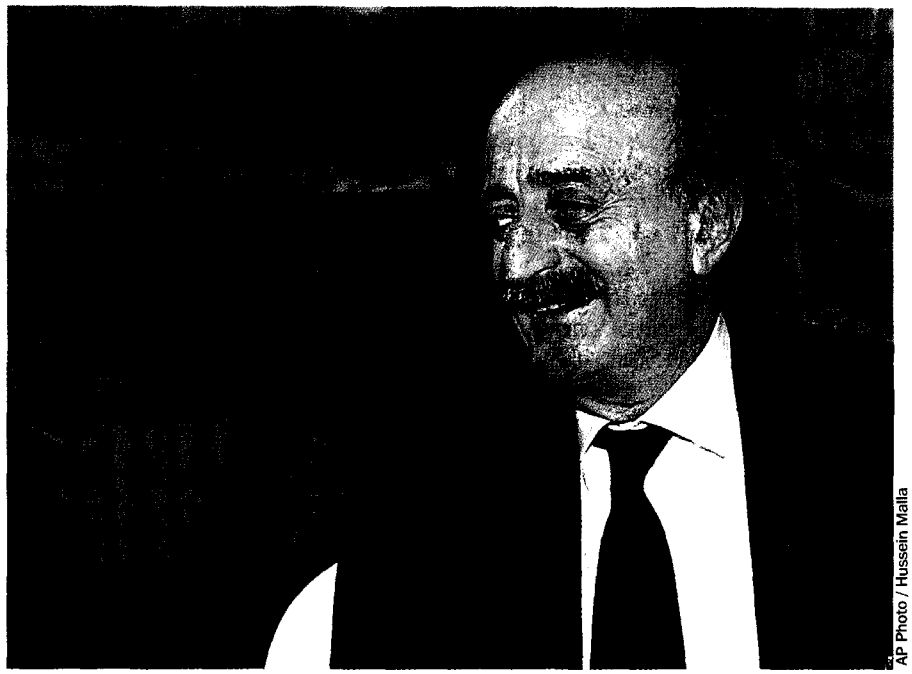
their past allies, like me, would defend them," Jumblatt told me a few weeks ago at his second home in Beirut's Clemenceau district. "In the past, I accepted their line as a fait accompli. Now I'm fed up, and for the first time in my life I feel free. I have a free conscience, because my father opposed Syria and now I can sleep at night."

This compelling personal drama is unfolding on a very large stage. All of a sudden the Bush administration's grand vision for a post-9/11, post-Iraq-war, free Middle East seems to hinge on a democratic Lebanon independent of Syrian tutelage. Meanwhile, the Assad regime's regional prestige, and maybe its survival, depends on its ability to control its neighbor. During the course of a career that was thrust upon him with the murder of his father, Jumblatt has shown himself to be a loyal leader deeply involved with the concerns of his Druze constituency, a ruthless enemy to his foe of the day, and a flexible, sometimes quixotic tactician who knows better than anyone else which way the wind is blowing in Lebanon. Jumblatt is not just an important player, but also a kind of guide to the action.



AP Photo / Hussein Malla

*Walid Jumblatt, next to a small Russian cannon, in his palace at Moukhtara*

Jumblatt and his Progressive Socialist party first broke with Syria over the decision by Damascus last September to extend by three years the term of Lebanese president Emile Lahoud. Syria's heavy-handed extension of Lahoud's mandate provided a rallying point for the Lebanese opposition, but what indicated that it had gained substantial ground inside the country was Jumblatt's January meeting with the wife of one of his Christian foes in the Lebanese civil war, Samir Geagea, the imprisoned leader of the Lebanese Forces, the Christian militia. With that meeting, the Syrians felt the ground shifting under their feet.

"Prohibiting intercommunal alliances was one of the main taboos imposed by Syria," says Farid al-Khazen, head of the political science department at the American University of Beirut. "But now we're coming back to the normal aspect of Lebanese politics, how it was before 1990, when the government and opposition both had leaders from different communities."

While Jumblatt's meeting with Mrs. Geagea was a sign that Syria was vulnerable—the Druze leader wouldn't have dared it otherwise—Jumblatt explains that it was also a step in postwar reconciliation. "We fought each other. There was a civil war. Spain had one and so did the United States. It's time to heal now and think about the future."

Whatever that future holds for Lebanon and the rest of the Arab world, the new alliances created and the old ones dashed by the forces now at work in the Middle East suggest that the region can no longer be understood in terms of the bipolar dynamic that has long dominated Middle East political discourse. There is not one Arab nation standing together against the imperialist designs of Washington and its Zionist stooges, as the struggle used to be construed here. Solving the Palestinian question is no longer the be-all and end-all of Middle East diplomacy. Rather, within the Arab world itself, there are countless challenges, conflicts, and political disputes between countries, tribes, religious, and ethnic groups that are rising to the surface. Neither the force of Arab nationalist rhetoric nor the violence of Arab nationalist regimes is capable of suppressing this any longer. Case in point: Syria's decades-long "relationship" with Lebanon has at last been named for what it is—an occupation.

Jumblatt himself has had recourse to plenty of anti-American, anti-Israel verbiage in the past. One of his most famous outbursts cost him an American visa after he said he wished Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz had been killed in a missile attack on the hotel he was staying in during a fall 2003 visit to Baghdad. Jumblatt called Wolfowitz a "virus" spreading "corruption in the Arab land of Iraq and in Palestine."

Now Jumblatt has reassessed the effects of that virus. "It's strange for me to say it," he told Ignatius last week, "but this process of change has started because of the American invasion of Iraq." When I phoned him last week, Jumblatt deadpanned: "Maybe I should just go to Washington now and become a neocon."

Of course, if the neoconservative creed consists of believing that there's



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a causal relationship between authoritarian Arab regimes and the social, political, and economic distress of the Middle East, then Jumblatt is already in the fold.

"These regimes cannot stay this way in the long term," he told me in Beirut. "The Arab world cannot stay like that. Arabs are leaving. Have you seen our elite? The Lebanese have an excellent elite, you find them wherever you go—they're in the States, and Europe. But the opposition movement is having an effect on the Lebanese diaspora. We need freedom so these people can come back. If we succeed, and set up a democracy like it used to be, we'll be an example in the region. Let Syria have the system they want, but let them leave us free. We want our system. We're the only country in the Arab world that has freedom of press and speech. The liberals throughout the region are waiting for us. If we fail, it will return to the status quo."

Has Jumblatt changed his mind about Wolfowitz? "Did you see the nice comments he had about me?" Jumblatt asks, referring to an interview Wolfowitz gave to Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation TV. ("Even a man like Walid Jumblatt who has said some not-so-nice things in the past has had a lot of courage in standing up to the Syrians. We admire that," Wolfowitz said.) Jumblatt goes on: "It shows that when you're dealing with civilized people, even if you attack them, you can engage in rational discourse. I know. You're called a traitor in the morning, and a patriot in the evening."

Whatever Jumblatt's feelings are about Bush administration officials, the one political figure he seems especially interested in right now is the controversial Iraqi Shiite leader Ahmad Chalabi—"an intriguing person," Jumblatt calls him. He jokes about Chalabi's many loyalties and the inability of his American patrons to figure him out. It seems Jumblatt appreciates the gamesmanship and survival instincts of a kindred spirit. In the two of them—with their fractious hot-and-cold attitudes toward U.S. power—one senses the emergence of a new type of Arab political leader (or perhaps the reemergence of an old type).

If the Arabs' Berlin Wall is crumbling, as a number of observers besides Jumblatt believe, the obvious casualties are Arab dictators. Who will replace them? The dictators themselves—whose explanation is echoed by any number of U.S. experts and academics—say *après nous*, a deluge of Islamist extremists. That certainly can't be ruled out. But it may also be the case that fewer Arab strongmen means more Jumblatts—opportunists, horse-traders, and politicians who are going to cut lots of deals, including with parties that are not friendly to U.S. interests. As some of our enemies pass from the scene, it's useful to recognize that many of our allies are also going to look different. ♦


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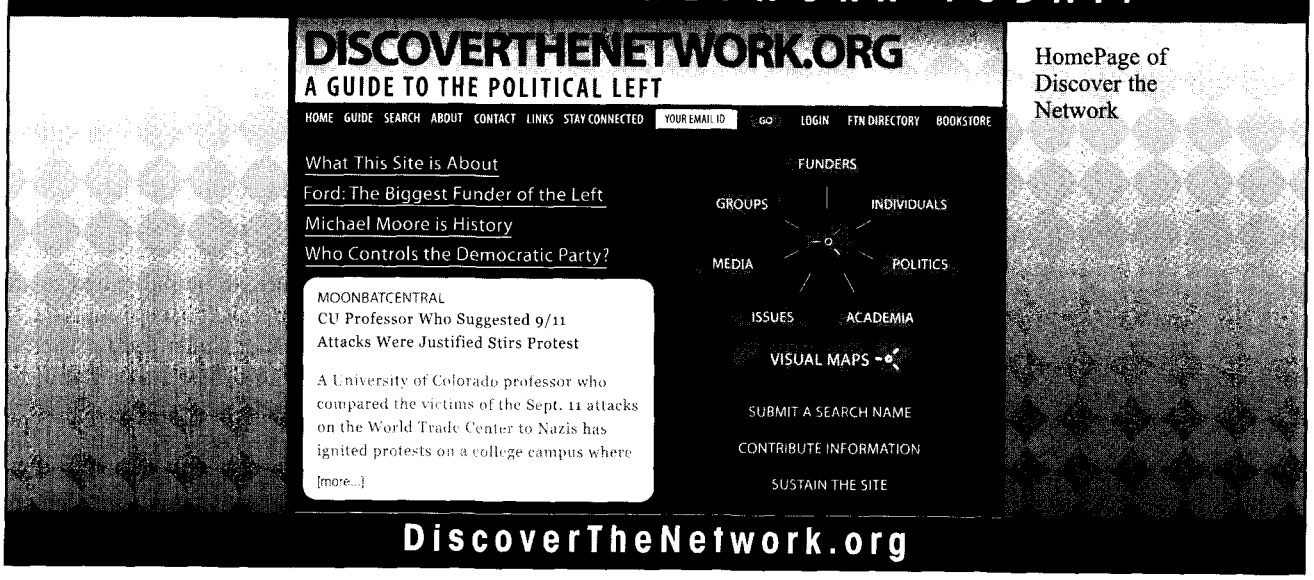


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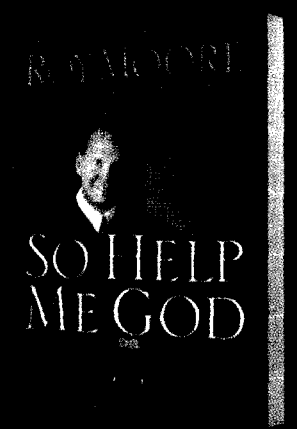


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# Beyond "Strange New Respect"

## The Stevens-Ginsburg billet-doux to Justice Kennedy. BY DAVID M. WAGNER

A NEW VARIATION on the "strange new respect" award is needed—in fact, is being developed—for Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy. The worst of Ronald Reagan's appointees to the Court, Kennedy delivered the 5-4 decision on March 1 in *Roper* v. *Simmons*, holding that killers who kill before they turn 18 can no longer be executed, because the meaning of the Eighth Amendment prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment has changed in the past 16 years.

"Strange new respect" was a Reagan-era coinage of Tom Bethell's, meant to sum up the unctuous indulgence with which the media receive the ideological surrender of a Washington conservative who has drifted left. (For instance, the website of *Progressive* magazine last week lauded Kennedy's action in *Roper* as showing "considerable growth and courage.") But what comes next if you've already earned "strange new respect"? If you're on the Supreme Court, then how about an official opinion from two colleagues flattering you as an Honorary Framer?

Justice Kennedy has been earning "strange new respect" since June 1992, when, in the space of a week, the Court announced opinions that he had authored or coauthored striking down prayers at high school graduations and—bitterest of all for those who had toiled for a Reaganesque Supreme Court—reaffirming *Roe* v. *Wade*. Since the release of the late Justice Harry Blackmun's papers, it has been a matter of public record that, in *Planned Parenthood* v. *Casey*, Kennedy abandoned a 5-4 majority that was ready to overrule *Roe*. Two years ago, in *Lawrence* v. *Texas*, he produced his *pièce de résistance*, striking down sodomy laws and arguably paving the way for the Court to one day strike down state laws prohibiting same-sex marriage.

In fairness, Kennedy dissented from the Court's disallowance of laws banning partial-birth abortion: Such laws, he insisted in his June 2000 dissent in *Stenberg* v. *Carhart*, are precisely the sort of can't-we-at-least-agree-on-this restriction that *Casey* allows for—or so he had thought. And on the same day as *Stenberg*, he dissented from the Court's decision in *Hill* v. *Colorado*, which upheld draconian restrictions on pro-life counseling outside abortion clinics. The Court's substantial withdrawal of abortion from the legislative process, he argued, makes one-on-one speech on the issue all the more important—a strong point.

Even so, Kennedy has come a long way from his days as a Sacramento lawyer-lobbyist and ally of the nascent Reagan circle. In recognition of which, and for his decision last week to ban capital punishment for juveniles, he has now been honored with an official concurrence by two of his colleagues, to be published in the United States Reports alongside all other Supreme Court opinions, concurrences, and dissents, suitable for citing as well as framing. What is unusual about this concurrence is that it does *nothing but* pat Justice Kennedy on the back and assure him that the Framers would be proud of him.

*David M. Wagner is associate professor of law at Regent University, and blogs at* ninomania.blogspot.com.



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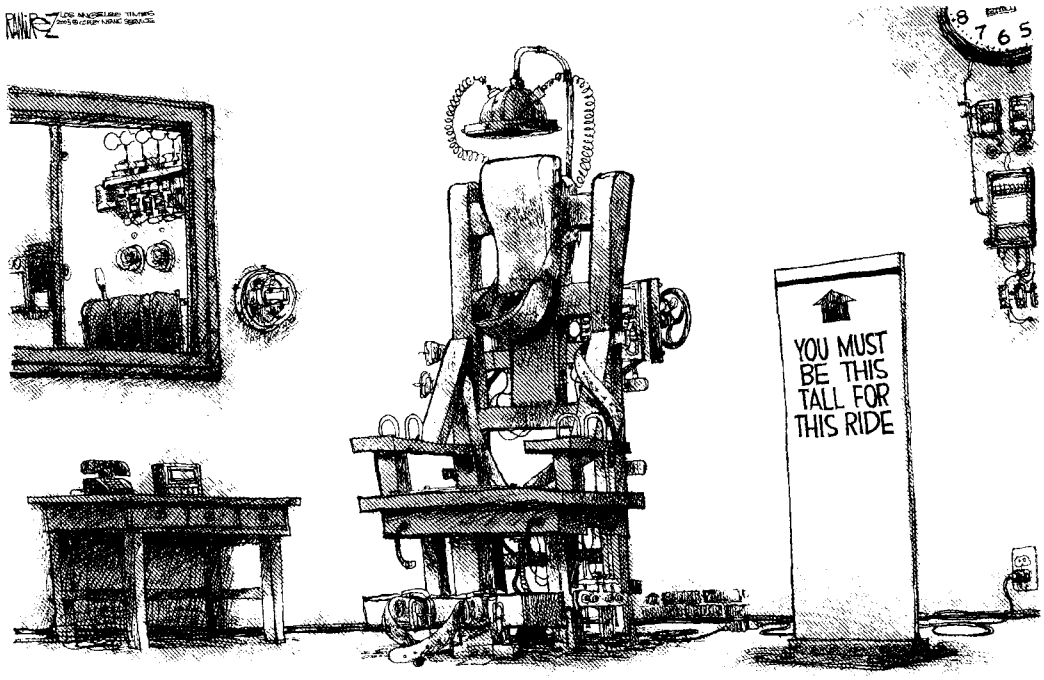


Michael Ramirez

This astonishing one-page concurrence was written by Justice John Paul Stevens and joined by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. First, they hail the Court's ruling on the preposterous grounds that without it, even 7-year-olds could have been executed, such having purportedly been the Common Law rule according to the Court's pre-March 1 jurisprudence.

They disdain to notice that other American institutions besides the U.S. Supreme Court are available to prevent the execution of 7-year-olds, and that, indeed, the failure of the justices in the majority to find such a case in American history suggests that those alternative safeguards are effective.

But never mind any of that. With a ritual nod to "evolving standards of decency," Stevens asserts: "That our understanding of the Constitution does change from time to time has been settled since John Marshall breathed life into its text."

Even John Marshall, no disparager of his own achievements, might well blanch at being likened to the God of Genesis, however allusively. He would also probably think the two concurrers had dialed the wrong John Marshall. Stevens and Ginsburg give us no citation here, so it's impossible to tell which of the Great Chief Justice's classically misunderstood dicta they are referring to, but we can guess.

It would probably be the one from *Marbury* v. *Madison*, about how "it is emphatically the province and duty of the judicial department to say what the law is." Of course: When two or more rules of law could apply to a case, the judge must determine which one prevails. That's what "saying what the law is" would have meant to a Blackstonian judge—and nearly all the lawyers of our founding generation learned from Blackstone's *Commentaries*. The "say what the law is" dictum does *not* mean "figure out what we personally think about some controversy and then declare that to be the law."

Or Stevens may have had in mind Marshall's dicta from *McCulloch* v. *Maryland*, about how "it is a constitution we are expounding," not a civil code, and a Constitution "intended to endure for ages to come, and, consequently, to be adapted to the various crises of human affairs." But it was the extent of *Congress's* powers, not the Court's own, that were at issue in *McCulloch*. These dicta are Marshall's explanation for construing Congress's powers broadly, allowing Congress some freedom to decide among various means of carrying out the powers assigned to it by the Constitution. Yet we constantly see these passages cited as though they announced a judicial power to change the Constitution—even though a Constitution laboring under such a rule would be ill suited to "endure for ages to come," since its meaning could change overnight by a poll of nine judges, as we saw last week in *Roper*.

Then comes the money line: "If great lawyers of his day—Alexander Hamilton, for example" (Justice Scalia quotes Hamilton at the opening of his dissent, you see)—"were sitting with us today, I would expect them to join Justice Kennedy's opinion for the Court." How nice. What next—carve Kennedy's visage on the Court's wall after they get rid of Moses?

Historically, the most successful conservative appointees to the high court have been jurists who had previous Washington experience, and who, despite that demoralizing experience, have a proven record—during or post-Washington—of defending their principles in the crucible of debate. Others, whose experience has been entirely in (say) Arizona or New Hampshire or California, find the plaudits of the media and the Georgetown A-list to be a bargain if all they cost is a retreat from certain conservative principles that one was, on second thought, not all that attached to anyway.

In Thomas Mann's novella *Mario and the Magician*, even people who think themselves strong-willed succumb to the sinister Cavaliere Cipolla, because they find, in the event, that independence of mind is really rather a burden. The only one who resists is a hot-blooded Italian . . . ♦



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# What Hath Ju-Ju Wrought!

*In the Middle East, the democratic genie is out of the bottle.*

## By Reuel Marc Gerecht

Have the Iraqi elections produced a democratic earthquake that has changed forever the fundamental political dynamics in the Muslim Middle East? Only the culturally deaf, dumb, and blind—for example, Michigan's Democratic senator Carl Levin—can't see what George W. Bush's war against Saddam Hussein has wrought. The issue is not whether the basic understanding of contemporary Muslim political legitimacy has been overturned—it has—but how forcefully the regimes in place will resist the growing Muslim democratic ethic.

And the crucial question for the United States is whether the Bush administration will realize that the most consequential regimes in place—Hosni Mubarak's in Egypt, the Saudi dynasty in Arabia, the military junta in Algeria, and the theocracy in Iran—probably won't evolve without some internal violence. The Bush administration ought to be prepared to encourage or coerce these regimes into changing sooner, not later. What the United States should fear most is not rapid change—the specter of the fallen shah of Iran will surely rise in many minds—but the agonizing, dogged resistance of dictatorship. (Would that the United States had understood in 1971, after the shah's delusional and obscenely expensive celebration of 2,500 years of Persian kingship, that Washington had an increasingly sclerotic, corrupt autocracy confronting perhaps the most intellectually dynamic and angry society in the Middle East.)

Although it is now beyond doubt that President Bush is philosophically a Reaganite—holding, that is, that the United States' self-defense is inextricably connected to the expansion and protection of democracy—many within his administration share Europe's overriding concerns about "stability" in the region. And even among Reaganites, it's not hard to find those who are profoundly anxious about Muslim fundamentalists becoming potentially powerful players if free elections were actually held in the Arab world. The Bush administration has not yet worked out a grand strategy of democratization: Clear, simple principles applied with as much consistency as practicable would be an entirely adequate approach. Events are likely to make Elliott Abrams's democracy-promotion job on the National Security Council perhaps the most critical office to President Bush. Iraq has unleashed a wave of pent-up frustration and anger against the status quo throughout the region. The clever dictators, like Mubarak and Tunisia's Zine el Abidine ben Ali, will try to preempt it by fixing multiparty elections and adopting pro-American/pro-Israeli foreign policy initiatives. The Bush administration will likely get hit from several directions at once, as the peoples of the Middle East and their rulers continue to react to what started on January 30, 2005.

Let's take a quick *tour d'horizon* and see where we are.

**Lebanon**—This may be the most promising—though it may not be the most important—aftershock of the January 30 elections. Syria is obviously in trouble in Lebanon. The assassination of former prime minister Rafik Hariri, coming so soon after Arabic satellite television beamed astonishing pictures of Iraqis risking their lives to vote, ignited long-simmering, anti-Syrian animosity among the Lebanese Christian and Sunni communities. (There may well be a Lebanese who doesn't believe Hariri was murdered by Syria's ruler Bashar al-Assad, but what is striking about the Lebanese rumor mill—one of the most energetic in the Middle East—is

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how unified the view is on Syrian culpability.) The most urgent question now is whether the Lebanese Shiite community, specifically the Amal and Hezbollah political movements, will back the Sunnis and the Christians in their call for Syria's ejection. Both organizations have substantial ties to Iran—Hezbollah is revolutionary Iran's only true child and remains the clerical regime's only foreign-policy success—and would be petrified of completely losing Tehran's support. It remains unclear what the Lebanese Shia are going to do, but if one had to bet, the odds are decent that Amal and Hezbollah will not break from the Lebanese Christian and Sunni communities.

As the Lebanese-American scholar Fouad Ajami regularly points out, the Lebanese Shia as a people do not want to be left behind in the country. If the vast majority of the other Lebanese have decisively broken with Syria—and they have—then the Shia will not separate themselves from their countrymen. This is even more true if clerical Iran, Hezbollah's mother ship, does not ride to the rescue of Bashar al-Assad. And there is reason to hope this will not be the case.

First and perhaps foremost, Bashar is inept. The cool, calculating rule of his father, Hafez al-Assad, has given way to the blundering of a young leader who has galvanized anti-Syrian sentiment even among traditionally pro-Syrian Lebanese. Say what you will about Iran's ruling clerics—they are a nasty collection of highly ideological power politicians willing to deploy terrorism at home and abroad whenever necessary—they are not fond of expending their own prestige and power on behalf of juveniles, especially when the odds are they would lose. Iran probably wouldn't mind seeing Bashar al-Assad fall from power in a palace coup—not an unlikely possibility if Syria gets forced out of Lebanon. As long as the Alawite clan (a heretical branch of Shiite Islam that has dominated Syria's Baath party) stays in power, the Iranians aren't likely to become too worried.

And the events in Lebanon don't necessarily spell disaster for the Syrians. What Thomas Friedman called the "Hama rules"—the willingness to slaughter regime opponents by the thousands, as Hafez al-Assad did in the town of Hama in 1982—still hold, and the Alawite regime appears cohesive enough to do this without hesitation. The Syrian Sunni desire for revenge against the minority Alawites is easily enough to ensure Alawite solidarity. The Sunnis, who believe they have always had the historic right to rule Syria, would probably not show the same consideration that Iraqi Shia have so far shown their former Baathist tormentors. It is possible that the democratic ethic may be growing among Syria's Sunni Arab population—Syria's awful tyranny, like Baathist Iraq's, can teach well the benefits of restraining state power—but that won't matter much against a savage regime with a ferocious internal security service and elite military units capable of artillery barrages against civilians.

Also, Lebanon has seen some form of democracy. Lebanon has never been fully of the Arab world—it is historically, religiously, culturally, and geographically a special place—and the idea of a democratic Lebanon probably isn't nearly as scary to the Middle East's despots as is the idea of a democratic Iraq or Egypt. (A Palestinian democracy has a bit of the same quality about it—Palestinians have existed in a surreal world for decades, where their triumphs and tragedies don't relate well to the day-to-day lives and local political frustrations of most Arabs.) Iran's clerics, or Syria's Alawites, or the Saudi princes, or the Mubarak family in Egypt don't necessarily view the return of Lebanese democracy as a dagger aimed at them. It is something they could live with—a price worth paying to eliminate from among them a damaging, Paris-Washington-uniting incompetent like Bashar al-Assad.

Unless Iran's clerical regime views the liberation of Lebanon as a lethal defeat for Hezbollah—and the organization's chief, Hassan Nasrallah, has been rhetorically fence-sitting about joining or damning the Christian and Sunni opposition to the Syrians—then the odds are good that the Syrians will withdraw. One can appreciate why the Lebanese youth cannot stop praising "Ju-Ju," an affectionate Arabic take on "George." They are willing to admit easily what comes much harder to many in Congress and in Washington's Democratic think tanks.

**Syria**—Drive them out of Lebanon but don't spend much time or effort trying to tighten the noose around the Baathist Alawites. The state is not as Orwellian as was Saddam Hussein's, but the ethnic and religious dynamics of its regime will make regime solidarity very difficult to overcome. However, if the Syrian Baathists are aiding the Iraqi Baathists to the extent that the Bush administration alleges—and the allegations appear solid—the United States ought to strike militarily. If American and Iraqi lives are being lost because of Bashar al-Assad's support of Iraqi Baathists in his country, then the Bush administration is being tactically and strategically negligent in not retaliating. This doesn't mean the United States should invade Syria. But Syrian intelligence and military bases—and any locales where Assad is hosting Iraqi insurgents—are legitimate targets for air and special-ops raids. It is possible that such limited military strikes could threaten the stability of the Alawite dictatorship, allowing an opportunity for a Sunni civilian and military opposition to gain ground.



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But the administration shouldn't bank on the democratic aftershocks of Iraq shaking Syria itself. It might happen. A good rule of thumb is that an appreciation for democracy has become more widespread in the Arab world than the American and European "realist" crowd would have us believe. But the best we should hope and plan for is an eventual cracking of Alawite power, allowing for a return of Sunni rule. With the Sunnis in charge, political evolution has some chance, particularly if the United States starts to focus its democratizing attention on the country in the Arab world that matters most—Egypt.

**Egypt**—Democratizing Egypt is what President Bush's post-9/11 "forward strategy of freedom" is all about. End the nexus between tyranny and Islamic extremism in the lower Nile Valley—the perverse pattern of Egyptian dictators Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Hosni Mubarak fueling anti-American Islamic militancy through both suppression and support—and one of the two most important intellectual breeding grounds for bin Ladenism (Saudi Arabia is the other) will turn into a laboratory where both secular and fundamentalist Sunni Muslims can make their case democratically. If Egypt doesn't democratize, bin Ladenism will not end. The hatred for American-supported dictators will continue to grow; the Muslim Brotherhood, the fount of all Sunni fundamentalists, will not be able to evolve politically further, moving devout Sunnis from Koranic shibboleths to democratically derived legislation that will be seen by most Islamic activists as both legitimate and at odds with the Muslim Holy Law.

Since Iraq, President Mubarak, who used to equate democracy with "chaos," sees a need for "more freedom and democracy" in Egypt. The odds are excellent he is actually trying to devise a system whereby, with less friction, he continues in power and the chances of succession for his son increase. But that doesn't mean the United States shouldn't take advantage of Mubarak's opening. If Mubarak thinks Egypt is ready for more democracy and freedom, then far be it from the United States not to take him at his word. Now is the time to announce that American aid to Egypt is henceforth conditioned on democratic progress. Mubarak cheats, the aid is cut. Mubarak cheats a lot, the aid ends. We should not allow Mubarak to scare us again with the specter of Islamic extremism. Fear of another Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini—who, by the way, didn't come to power democratically—has too long paralyzed our thinking about Egypt.

As has Egypt's peace treaty with Israel. Many supporters of Israel in the United States have become de facto backers of dictatorship in Egypt because they fear the Islamist boogeyman. They want to believe that the system in Egypt can liberalize—even though nowhere in the Arab world have we yet seen an Ataturkist evolution. Indeed, the evolution of Arab dictatorship has been in the opposite direction, toward the nexus that gave us bin Ladenism and 9/11. They really don't want to give fundamentalists a chance to compete in elections; they want "progressive Muslims" to somehow be nourished—to spring more or less full-grown from the head of Mubarak, as did Athena from Zeus. They would rather not reflect too long on the history of democratic Christendom—that you don't get to arrive at Thomas Jefferson unless you first pass through Martin Luther. But Natan Sharansky is right: Democracy, sooner not later, is the only way out. The liberal critics of the Bush administration's democracy promotion have usually been cranky and unfair—it's pretty hard to envision the region's democrats, particularly those on the front lines in Iraq and Lebanon, cheering John Kerry—but they may soon have a point. In the not too distant future, Washington is going to have to break with the Mubarak regime. If we don't, bin Laden's jihadist call, and not the shouts for "Ju-Ju," will be the summons with lasting appeal.

**Saudi Arabia**—Continue to push the democratic agenda publicly in the Arabian peninsula. The rather pathetic Saudi attempt to defuse democratic ferment at home and the Bush administration's growing anti-Saudi attitude by holding highly restricted municipal elections is likely to do the opposite of what the royal family intended. The Shiites of the Eastern Province—where most of Saudi Arabia's oil is located—may, as the Arab Shiites of Iraq continue to advance democratically, become more inclined to protest. The turnout for the municipal elections clearly showed that the Shiites in the Eastern Province didn't consider the exercise a joke (as was the case among many Sunnis).

The Wahhabi clerical establishment, the religious backbone of Saudi power, may become more inclined to use older, violent means to oppress the Shiites. Washington should rhetorically preempt the issue, by declaring loudly and often that it favors modern democracy in Saudi Arabia, where minority rights are protected. We would be wise not to assume that the Saudi royal family is more "modern" than the people of the country. It may well be more "modern" than the average Wahhabi in the Najd region, the heartland of Wahhabi power. But Saudi Arabia is much larger than the Najd.

It is possible that a variation of the Iranian experience has been at work in Saudi Arabia, that Saudi-Wah-



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habi power has distanced an ever greater number of people from the Saudis' rigorous fusion of religion and state. Saudi Arabia is an odd place, with a large number of people permeated with Western ways. Sometimes that fuels Islamic militancy. Sometimes it does the opposite. Both may be happening in Arabia. In either case, we know for certain that Saudi Arabia was the cradle of bin Ladenism. There is scant evidence to suggest that the Wahhabi establishment has changed its spots (philosophically it can't). The Wahhabis should have to compete for their flock. Inside the country and out, the United States should be relentlessly pushing for democracy. As in Egypt, we should increasingly tie government-to-government relations and joint programs directly to Saudi progress with real national elections.

**Algeria and Tunisia**—North Africa has traditionally been ignored by the Americans. It shouldn't be. It would be a good test of France's desire to advance democratic change in the Middle East to see if Paris would rhetorically join the United States in energetically encouraging democracy in both countries. Tunisia has an increasingly lively democratic culture developing on the Internet in the form of blogs and virtual publications, both inside and outside the country. Stealing a page from Hosni Mubarak's playbook, President Zine el Abidine ben Ali recently invited Israel's Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to Tunisia in a crude (but with the Egyptians effective) effort to get on America's good side through the Israelis. Ben Ali read the tea leaves after the January 30 election and decided to preempt.

*There are many things the administration should do to exploit the people power of Iraq, but first and foremost is an Iraqi C-SPAN.*

The Bush administration should relentlessly thump ben Ali—criticize his dictatorship whenever and wherever possible. Since ben Ali, like Mubarak, has recently discovered the damage the lack of democracy has done to the Arab world, Washington could begin simply by using his words against him. Tunisia, like Algeria, is hardly a strategically critical country for the United States. There are no airfields there that we absolutely must use to continue the war on terror. All official dealings with these two states should be premised on their governments' support of democratic reform. And the Bush administration would be wise to revisit the position of Algeria in the Arab world. Scarred by the civil war of the early 1990s, Algerians are probably a much wiser people than they were when Islamists first began to challenge the corrupt military dictatorship.

Algeria's highly Westernized young would probably embrace the chance to remove the military dictatorship over them—if they had some possibility of doing so without confronting the official black ninjas who rival the throat-slitting Islamic militants in savagery. Algeria's failed experiment with democracy in the 1990s was closely watched in the Muslim world, particularly among fundamentalists. If Algeria were to get back on track and follow through with democratic reforms, the impact on the region, and on the millions of Algerians who live in Europe, would likely be significant.

**Iran**—Don't compromise the democratic future of the country by trying to buy the mullahs' nuclear goodwill. Democracy in Iran is the key to ending that country's long embrace of terrorism. And if there is a nationalist desire in Iran to have nuclear weapons (we only know for sure there is a clerical will to have these arms), then talking with a democracy about them is entirely different from trying to appease a dictatorship, which is what the French, British, Germans, and certain quarters at the State Department and the National Security Council would like to do. One can live with a nuclear-armed democracy. The Bush administration should realize that the American policy of containment has helped create the most pro-American Muslim population in the Middle East. We should be patient. Let Iraq's Shia, in particular Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani's democratic opinions and actions, have their effect.

**Iraq**—Remember that January 30 was only the first democratic wave to come out of that country. If Iraq doesn't go off the rails—and the odds are very good that the Shiites, Kurds, and Sunnis will find workable democratic compromises—there will be more election aftershocks issuing from Mesopotamia, probably of a magnitude greater than January 30. The trial of Saddam Hussein is coming. There are many things the administration should do to exploit the people power of Iraq, but first and foremost is an Iraqi C-SPAN *controlled by Iraqis*. There is a large audience in the Arab world, especially in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, just waiting to see the next episode from Baghdad. Let the millions watch Saddam's trial live. Republicans and Democrats who believe in spreading democracy in the Muslim Middle East shouldn't disappoint these hungry viewers. Perhaps Osama bin Laden will also watch and see the end of his dreams. ♦



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# The Sage of Fresno

## *Victor Davis Hanson, down on the farm*

**By Jonathan Kay**

*Selma, California*

Most people who earn Ph.D.s aspire to tenure-track professorships, think-tank jobs, or careers in government. When Stanford University awarded Victor Davis Hanson his classics degree 26 years ago, he chose to become a farmer.

"My grandmother was 93 and living alone," Hanson tells me as his pickup bounces along a dirt road winding through his family's grape vineyard. "My brothers, cousins, and I decided we'd come home and see if we could put the farm right."

But his career as a full-time farmer lasted just four years. In 1984, the price of raisin grapes fell from $1,300 per ton to $450. Struggling to make ends meet, Hanson reluctantly dusted off his résumé, got into his truck, and drove to the closest university, California State at Fresno. "I was dressed like this," he tells me, gesturing to his red and black lumberman's jacket and work-worn blue jeans. "The dean couldn't believe I was a Stanford Ph.D. The chairman made me go home and get my diploma."

On weekdays, Hanson would wake at 5 A.M. to prune his grape vines, then drive 25 miles to Fresno where he taught Greek and Latin to Mexican immigrants and working-class students. In what time remained, he managed to author a slew of weighty tomes on the wars of the ancient Greeks that made his name as one of America's preeminent military historians.

Farmer and classicist in equal measure, Hanson has led something of a double life. But read his work and it becomes clear that the two identities are intimately joined. From his early books on the Peloponnesian campaigns to his widely read post-9/11 essays on Afghanistan and Iraq, the connection between agriculture and war emerges as a constant theme.

Most classicists trace the advent of Greek democracy to the urban culture of Athens. Hanson takes another view. In his 1995 book, *The Other Greeks: The Family Farm and The Agrarian Roots of Western Civilization*, he argues that such institutions as constitutional government and property rights originated in large part with rural landholders. The patterns of rural life also influenced the way Greeks went to war, he believes. As Hanson notes in *Carnage and Culture*, most Greek foot soldiers, the hoplites, were not full-time conscripts like those of Persia or other Eastern powers, but rather volunteer farmers who were needed back home at harvest time. Greek armies thus favored quick, decisive infantry battles. The resulting theory of war, Hanson argues, has survived through the centuries and even finds echoes in campaigns fought by modern Western armies.

Hanson, representing the fifth generation of his family to work this land since it was first homesteaded by Swedish ancestors in 1871, also sees an important connection between farm life and America's role in the world. The farm is a "crucible of character" and martial valor, no less in the United States of today than it was in ancient Thebes. Hanson takes as his model the citizen-soldier, a humble creature of the land who puts down his hoe and takes up the rifle in a proud tradition carried on by America alone.

"There's an element in this country that is unchanged in the last 200 years," he says. "It cannot be defined by race or religion. They are the people who made this country unique and retain a tragic sense. They gravitate to the military or live in rural America or work with their hands. If you talk to captains or lieutenants in Iraq, you won't find anything in them that is different from their equivalents in World War II."

And so, even as Hanson has spent the years since 9/11 filling the pages of *Commentary*, *City Journal*, and *National Review* with articles about fighting militant Islam, he spends as much time worrying about what corporate agriculture and demographic trends are doing to his native San Joaquin Valley. Fresno County is home to six of the ten poorest towns in California, and attracts a steady stream of illegal immigrants looking for agricultural work. In 2003, Hanson wrote a book focusing on their plight, *Mexifornia*. (The provocative title was not his idea, he's

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quick to mention.) His politically incorrect prescription for the region's woes is a return to the melting pot. From watching two generations of farmhands work his property and teaching students at CSU-Fresno, he's concluded that Mexican-American children must learn proper English or inherit their parents' limited prospects.

Driving toward town, we pass a row of farms, and Hanson recites the names of families who worked them back when he was a child. Most have moved on. The days of the family farm are gone, he laments, and with it, Selma's civic pride. Lawns have become dumping grounds for refuse and parking spots for mobile homes. Back roads have been turned into slalom courses of discarded garbage and old furniture. Even the old timers seem to have stopped caring. Meanwhile, nearby Fresno is rapidly expanding. Sooner or later, all of this land will be given over to strip malls and tract housing. Selma's "crucible of character" is crumbling before Hanson's eyes.

"Sometimes I go back and read copies of the *Fresno Bee* from the 1950s, and it breaks my heart," he tells me. "I was reading an article from 1957 that went something along the lines of: 'Mr. Smith was arrested when a syringe was found in his family's house. The family members expressed shame.' Or 'the Lion's Club failed to meet its fundraising goal. They promised to do better next year.' There were high moral standards without cynicism or nihilism. Now, you pick up the paper and there are two kinds of stories: crime hit pieces and 'feel good' vapid multicultural be-all-you-can-be stories. 'Mr. Rodriguez bought *two* Christmas trees this year'—that's a story."

Hanson places much of the blame for this decay on America's elites, who he says have fostered a cult of post-modernism, identity politics, and affirmative action—or, as he puts it, "diversity without standards." As a classicist, he sees this as nothing less than a renunciation of the intellectual traditions bequeathed by the Greeks.

"Multiculturalism, in preference to a multiracial embrace of Western culture, has become what pulp was in the 1950s," he tells me as he navigates the truck between a rotting sofa and a bed frame. "Plato told us this was inevitable: The more you embrace a state-mandated egalitarianism for its own sake and radical democracy, . . . the more you will be driven to the common denominator of a therapeutic, happy-go-lucky culture, simple stories, low-brow entertainment, minimal expectations—rather than the hard work of using education to uplift the majority."

If Hanson's great hero is the citizen-farmer, his great villain is the effete, left-wing urbanite—the relativist, the poseur, the spoiled gadabout who has ignorantly embraced fashionable opinions. Hanson himself is a registered Democrat, but he loathes "boutique liberal multimillionaires" and freely acknowledges the party he admires has been extinct since the days of Truman and JFK. "There are a lot of people who are simply not equipped for capitalism," he tells me. "You have to look out for them. The Democratic party is supposed to be about giving ordinary people a stake in society. But those aren't the people who speak for the Democrats these days. The people who write for *Harper's*, you put them in a trailer out here, they'd go nuts."

Victor Davis Hanson

Earl Keleny

When Hanson gets on this theme, his voice rises slightly. One senses he has not entirely forgiven the sneering welcome he received at Fresno State a quarter century ago. Railing against America's intellectual establishment, he hits his target from both sides—as both a rural farmer who feels urban America's patronizing sting and as a scholar who can easily unmask the elites' intellectual pretensions.

"Go out and quiz a history post-grad," he says. "What



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were the tactics employed at Gettysburg? Who was General Thomas? What was the Anaconda plan? They won't know. Look instead at the titles of their dissertations: The Cuban medical system, the history of footwear, gender in the revolutionary war."

"Do you know why Michael Moore doesn't like people filming him when he speaks?" he asks, summoning a name that appears often in his writing. "It's because he can't finish a sentence. Because he's uneducated, and that's exactly how he sounds. I saw him speak on C-SPAN once and it went mostly like this: 'You know, like, they're coming to get—you know—like you and you. For the army. And it's for oil, man. You know. Bush and Cheney.' And that was the range of his delivery. We apparently no longer apply any litmus tests to public figures who assume positions of wisdom. We no longer ask, 'Is the man educated? Does he speak well? Is he a man of honor who speaks the truth?' . . . There is only one way to be educated. Read narrative history, read the great novels, read philosophy, learn foreign languages. But we've forgotten all that in our therapeutic culture."

By 21st-century political typology, Hanson's love of the pastoral life, distrust of large corporations, and embrace of old-fashioned values might put him in the paleoconservative camp. And indeed, he was once horrified by the "neocon" projects he now defends. "I remember it was 1998 and I was in the library reading a magazine article about the [Project for the New American Century's] letter to Bill Clinton asking for regime change in Iraq," he tells me. "And I thought, 'That's crazy!' The whole idea of preemption in Iraq made no sense to me."

But then came 9/11, and Hanson's thinking changed radically. Like the campaigns against Prussian militarism and Nazism, the war against militant Islam is not one of America's choosing, he argues. As a student of military history, he believes there is only one way to wage it—ferociously and single-mindedly, in the tradition of Patton, Sherman, and the Theban general Epaminondas. The result of Hanson's political shift is a worldview that looks back to the ancient virtues even as it defends the most modern of wars and the controversial Bush Doctrine, thus reconciling the two major strains of the conservative movement.

Later, as we sit at his farmhouse dinner table, he points to a chair. "That's where my paternal grandfather would visit, sit, and tell us about World War One, with my other maternal grandfather, the host, in rapt attention," Hanson says. "I used to listen to him, my father, and my uncle-in-law, and they'd count off the family members who'd been killed or wounded in war. That number included my father's cousin—my namesake Victor Hanson—who died at Okinawa. My grandfather himself was gassed in the Argonne. And my father flew 39 missions in a B-29 over Japan. But they had no regrets. I was never tutored in isolationism."

Hanson is now one of the Bush administration's most passionate and prolific defenders. Having recently taken early retirement from Fresno State and joined the Hoover Institution at Stanford University in Palo Alto, he devotes much of his time to writing essays. He also contributes 1,800 words per week to *National Review Online*, and has begun a syndicated weekly column distributed through Tribune Media Services. Later this year, Random House will release his new book on the Peloponnesian War. As if that weren't enough, he also maintains a website (*victorhanson.com*), where he answers readers' questions about the Iraq war, ancient military tactics, and the modern academy.

Many war pundits have done their best to situate the Iraqi and Afghan conflicts in historical perspective. But few can go back as far as Hanson. In the June 2004 *Commentary*, he defended the number of U.S. troops deployed in Iraq with the dizzying observation that "Alexander the Great, who never led an army numbering more than 50,000 men, defeated hordes five times that size in battle. . . . Julius Caesar conquered and held much of Western Europe with legions that numbered fewer than 40,000. The British defeated both Cetchewayo and the Great Mahdi with a few thousand redcoats, [and] Thucydides did not believe the Athenian disaster at Syracuse was necessarily caused by the smallish armada sent over by imperial Athens."

Hanson's expertise has brought him political influence. When I visited his farm in January, he had just come back from a meeting at the White House, where he was among five experts who'd been asked for their critiques of the Iraq war. The other four were Charles Krauthammer, Elliott Abrams, Fouad Ajami, and John Lewis Gaddis. Impressive company for a humble farmer. And one senses it all makes Hanson a little uncomfortable. "Everyone I met in D.C. was gossiping about this important guy they met and that guy they met," he tells me. "Me? I spent yesterday negotiating with a Sikh farmer who was renting some of my land."

While gaining national prominence as a pundit, however, Hanson has become unpopular here in Selma. His books on immigration have turned him into a target for local diversity boosters. His stance on Iraq, too, has lost him friends. Hanson has two brothers, one a twin. Thanks to political differences, neither will speak to him. "I've lost almost all the friends I grew up with," he



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tells me. "People will come up to me, wag their finger, and tell me, 'I knew your mom. Now you're just a Bush lover.'"

Selma is becoming less hospitable in other ways, too. Methamphetamine labs are now common. On one recent occasion, police drove across Hanson's farm in hot pursuit of drug dealers. On another, Hanson had to escort a pair of fugitives off his property at gunpoint. His three sons now grown, Hanson, who lives with his wife of 28 years, is musing about spending more time in Palo Alto. But it's hard to imagine him off the farm: So much of his identity and intellectual energy is tied up with the land. Moreover, Hanson doesn't play so well with others. At a recent meeting at Hoover, he strained to remain polite when a free-market colleague blithely dismissed America's family farmers as road-kill on the path to efficient markets. At a meeting in Europe, he shocked his Bush-loathing Swiss host by lecturing him about the profits his nation made from Holocaust loot. And, needless to say, Hanson's views on affirmative action would make him anathema to most elite university administrations. The safe bet seems to be that he will continue to spend most of his time in Selma, chronicling the breakdown of rural America even as he urges it to rescue the cities from George Soros and Osama bin Laden.

The decay of Hanson's natural habitat, however, only partly explains his melancholy air. There is a sense of unfulfillable longing about the man—for an ideal of citizenship, of culture, of honor and decency and shame that is passing irreversibly into history. (In a recent *National Review Online* essay, he wrote that visiting Normandy leads one to "prefer the wisdom of the noble dead to the ignorance of the shameful living.") This longing is a powerful muse: Few writers combine such a broad understanding of the ancient world with a deep desire to resurrect its virtues. One suspects also that the tragic nature of the project takes its toll.

But Hanson isn't going to give up the battle any time soon. In fact, he has just started a new project—a novel. "It's about the Helots, the indentured servants of the Spartans," he tells me. "They were freed by Epaminondas. He was accused of all sorts of heresies and ulterior motives. The book's about preemption, multilateralism, confronting your enemies, democracy for the dispossessed, and ending tyranny.

"It's an allegory, I'm afraid," he adds. "That should be pretty obvious." ♦

Michael Ramirez



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# A Prescription for Senile Liberalism

## *Less Howard Dean, more FDR*

**By Joel Kotkin**

*. . . The sixth age shifts*
*Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,*
*With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,*
*His youthful hose, well sav'd, a world too wide*
*For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,*
*Turning again toward childish treble, pipes*
*And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,*
*That ends this strange eventful history,*
*Is second childishness and mere oblivion,*
*Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.*
"As You Like It," Act II, Scene 7

With the installation of Howard Dean as Democratic party chairman, modern American liberalism enters its dotage. As Jaques says in *As You Like It*, this age resembles "second childishness and mere oblivion." In Dean, we see the last bloom of baby boom liberalism, reverting to its 1960s type, but "sans taste, sans everything"—including a sense of the moment. Today's liberals are too mired in their childhood traumas to focus on what is their party's main chance: domestic issues surrounding middle-class concerns in an era of social and economic instability, the rising challenge posed by China and India, and the cloudy prospects facing the next generation. These problems point to the failings of the political status quo; constant reminders of this failure include the nation's creaking infrastructure, dysfunctional educational system, and ever-expanding trade and balance of payments deficits. These phenomena represent a threat to continued American preeminence. Rising to meet the challenge would seem perfectly natural to a nationalist progressive of the last century: a Theodore Roosevelt, Al Smith, Fiorello LaGuardia, Franklin Roosevelt, or Hubert Humphrey. Such men would have risen to the challenge with something akin to martial virtue. FDR, in his first inaugural, compared the challenge of the Depression to "every stress of vast expansion of territory, of foreign wars, of bitter internal strife, of world relations." He called not for self-pity, weakness, or redress, but for the "frankness" and "vigor" that he considered "essential to victory."

The senile liberalism speaking through today's Democratic party—in "childish treble, pipes and whistles in his sound"—shares none of this robust patriotism. The Vietnam-era orientation of its baby boom elite reeks of ambivalence about a strong America. Even the best of contemporary liberals dare not speak in the harsh, uncompromising terms of national power or security but only appeal to abstract ideals.

Arguments about Wilsonian idealism among the Washington-pundit wing of the Democratic party—while more attractive than Deaniac isolationism—will not rally middle-class voters. A far better approach would be to support a strong American military but with the understanding that, for the foreseeable future, defense and security will not constitute the party's strongest suit.

Domestic issues provide far more fertile ground for Democrats. The vast majority of Americans, according to the most recent *Wall Street Journal* poll, want their government to concentrate on domestic issues rather than foreign concerns. It is here where the Republicans, and the conservative movement in general, are most vulnerable.

The broadest area of opportunity for Democrats lies in a series of domestic issues that, for reasons ranging from ideology to class interest, Republicans are ill-suited to tackle with passion or skill. These revolve around factors affecting America's global competitiveness, both as an economic and technological power, in the new century.

Americans confront these realities far more directly

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than they do broader geopolitical concerns. They feel them when they travel on pothole-filled roads or when they worry about their jobs or businesses or when they interact with an education system that, even in the suburbs, consistently underperforms those of our rivals.

All but the most addled baby boomers grasp that we are producing a generation that may lack sufficient intellectual and physical mettle to compete with the children of China, India, and other fast-rising countries. Turn-of-thecentury progressives sensed a similar process of debilitation and proposed bold steps to deal with it. They started on the local level, with efforts of city leaders in places as diverse as New York, Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, and Los Angeles to modernize local political and education systems, and to build modern infrastructure. "Sewer socialism," as opposed to today's remedial liberalism, saw increasing the productive capacity of the nation as the best way to improve the prospects for the middle and working classes.

James Bennett

Unfortunately modern liberals, from the New Deal's Adolph Berle to today's Robert Reich, have adopted a more prescriptive and elitist approach. Rather than boosting "internal improvements," they have looked with favor on the European practice of allocating resources to favored companies and industries. In the place of predatory capitalists, they have urged the elevation of elite bureaucrats along the lines seen in Paris and Brussels.

These models have failed miserably on the continent, and not many entrepreneurs, even socially progressive ones, would likely support such an approach. But many might back a program aimed, for example, at correcting congested roads or modernizing the antiquated railroads and waterways that undermine our ability to compete efficiently. The most modern ports today are not in New York or Los Angeles but in Hong Kong and Singapore. Even Mexican ports are bidding to take work from Southern California's congested harbors.

This pattern applies even in high-tech telecommunications, a field where this country has been the unquestioned pioneer. A recent study by the Center for an Urban Future found only spotty access to broadband Internet services in New York, once outside the urban core. In better wired foreign cities such as Seoul, Perth, or Sydney, high-speed access is almost ubiquitous.

The key for Democrats would be to propose improvements primarily to augment the nation's economic power. They would have to resist the temptation to use such expenditures as "pork" to favored constituencies, notably public employees.

Education clearly represents the biggest weakness of all. American public school students are famously behind their foreign counterparts in virtually all critical skill areas, particularly science and math. American teens consistently rank behind most competitors in the advanced world in math, light-years behind such places as Finland, Korea, Japan, and Canada. As the unquestioned party of power, the Republicans can no longer pass the buck to the Democrats. America's shortcomings, by definition, have now become theirs.

The Democratic party, however, cannot provide an antidote to this failure as long as it remains held in fee simple by the education lobby and the teachers' unions. Much of the egregious stupidity in our current education system—bilingual education, for example—stems from 1960s liberalism and its unwillingness to impose rigor on anyone, including children. Instead of being cowed by self-seeking education "professionals," the party needs to reform itself, shifting its primary loyalty to students and parents. Only then can they make a powerful case for more, but better targeted, investments in education, including not only for elite students but also for the non-college bound.



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Enduring weaknesses in education, training, and infrastructure can be linked to other symptoms of long-term American decline, such as record trade deficits, an ebbing of our technological leadership, and our inability to deal with our growing energy dependence. Conservatives may argue that these problems can be solved by the market alone and that, along the way, many Americans will reap benefits, as both consumers and investors, from the rise of nations such as India and China. But history is a stern judge. Nations that lose their economic competitiveness and become primarily consuming nations—say, 16th-century Venice, 18th-century Holland, 19th-century China—gradually undermine their place in the world.

Many businesspeople and economists sense that we are entering a new, and potentially dangerous, era. Modern manufacturing and distribution, notes the University of North Carolina's John Kasarda, relies heavily on both skilled labor and ease of transport, two increasingly creaky assets in much of the country. In this sense, America's competitiveness problems stem not so much from trade itself, but from our own homegrown inadequacies. "We spend too much energy worrying about foreigners," suggests Steve Miller, interim CEO at Federal Mogul and former president at Bethlehem Steel, "but the problems are really in ourselves."

Miller worries that mounting pension costs, the lack of skilled younger workers, feckless executives, and inconsistent trade policies may hobble our competitive advantage in the new century. This threatens the critical concern for most middle-class Americans—the upward mobility of the next generation. The concern is particularly acute for immigrants and their offspring, especially those who arrive undereducated from the developing world.

It is true that over the past 20 years, contrary to the claims of some left-wing propagandists, millions of people have succeeded against the odds to raise themselves from poverty into the middle class. But the gap between rich and poor—and, perhaps more important in political terms, between the middle class and the rich—has expanded more than at any time since the years before the Depression. This is most evident in the big blue cities like New York and Los Angeles but also in parts of the sunbelt, such as Arizona and North Carolina.

As we lose more industrial, service, and other high-wage jobs, we could see a further erosion in the relative position of the middle class and of their children. Most postelection polls suggested that Americans did not vote for George Bush because they were confident in their economic future; they did so, in large part, because of the inability of the Deaniac Democrats to craft any kind of viable, attractive alternative vision.

These issues provide a possible key to unlocking the electoral map for Democratic presidential aspirants. But one has to understand a country before trying to lead it. Sadly, for many leading Democrats, America, as Shakespeare put it, remains "the undiscover'd country," populated by suburbanites who lack the elevated consciousness of the true-blue metropolitans.

The basic geographic and demographic trends shaping America are not friendly to '60s-era liberalism. Over 90 percent of all metropolitan growth in America since 1950 has taken place in suburbia, which is now home to a majority of Americans. Democrats of the Dean persuasion can barely stand to address these voters, whose tract houses and SUVs affront their aesthetic, cultural, ecological, and social sensibilities. They feel more comfortable trying to extract more votes from their ever-diminishing


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"base" in places like San Francisco, Seattle, Manhattan, Madison, and Minneapolis.

This is a losing strategy. As the *Los Angeles Times* has reported, 97 out of the 100 fastest growing counties in the nation went for Bush; almost all are exurbs. The percentages are even higher in counties where there are the highest numbers of young white children; in these "new Mayberrys," reports demographer Bill Frey, Bush won upwards of 60 percent of the total vote.

Some Democrats justify their rejection of the suburbs by imagining them to be bastions of the racist and reactionary. Yet the suburbs are themselves changing. Today immigrants and their children are as likely to locate in the suburbs as in the cities; middle-class African Americans are following a similar course. In Southern California, where I live, many suburban areas are now more ethnically diverse than the hip ultra-liberal reaches of Los Angeles's westside.

Whatever their race, most suburbanites do not seem to regret their move to the periphery. They surely do not want government to herd them into "environmentally acceptable" crowded apartment districts near transit stops. When suburbanites hear liberal new urbanists and environmentalists—many of whom have their own country hideaways—prate about the need for more density, they see an attack on their families and their life's work. What they want are better, more efficient, humane suburbs, with greater access to public open space, better transport, and greater economic opportunity. This should constitute a significant part of the Democratic platform, from the county courthouse to the Congress.

To some Democrats, a message gauged to appeal to the "undiscover'd country" somehow represents a rejection of all liberal values. If liberalism means affirmative action, unrestricted abortions, ever more invasive controls on small property owners, gay marriage, and opposition to any hint of religious ideals, then the ideas suggested here are indeed heretical. These positions are acceptable to the Democratic party faithful in large part because their base lies with groups such as government workers or university professors, who would benefit from an expansion of government power and control. The other major blocs of support, outside of organized labor, come from social liberals on Wall Street and in Hollywood, and high-tech billionaires, people largely immune to the ill effects of liberal *dirigisme*.

Academics, public employees, Hollywood stars, and Internet billionaires, along with alienated minorities, do not, however, constitute a basis for a progressive majority. A majority can only grow from a concentration on the middle class and must be in line with its historic aspirations.

Even in Jeffersonian and Jacksonian times, progressive ideals in America focused less on redistributing wealth than preserving the opportunity for the independent proprietor. In America, as opposed to Europe, Jefferson noted, "most of the laboring class possess property." Property owners do not generally want to see the state expanding its controls, but instead seek protection from concentrations of wealth and power.

Extending the rights of these smallholders was a central feature of American progressivism in the era of the Free Soil movement, the Homestead Act, the restrictions on monopoly capitalism and railroad oligopolies. Even Franklin Roosevelt—who saw himself very much in the Progressive tradition—pledged himself to "keeping the homeowner and the farmer where he is" and to giving them protection against foreclosure. He chided President Hoover for providing funds to prop up large economic institutions but not for small property owners.

Once in office, Roosevelt initiated steps to protect the mortgages of both farmers and homeowners, often against the opposition of traditional conservatives. The Homeowners Loan Corporation, established in 1933, was the first of many federal programs, such as the Federal Housing Administration and the Veterans Administration, to encourage home ownership and back mortgages. These same policies would be embraced by centrist Democrats from Truman to Kennedy, to Humphrey, and all the way to Bill Clinton.

The New Deal also saw the birth of the modern liberalism that has since seized control of the Democratic party. If the old progressive tradition lived on in programs from the TVA to the California Water Project, modern liberalism in the 1960s and 1970s produced motley offspring such as racial and gender quotas, judicial fiat over the most intimate social relations, and the nurturing of an ever-expanding unionized government apparat. This latter-day liberalism is unlikely to lead the Democrats back to victory. It may appeal to what Chairman Dean fondly calls "the Democratic wing of the Democratic party," but it is also likely to have scant appeal among the majority of middle-class Americans.

What Republicans should fear but Democrats seem reluctant to provide is a middle-class agenda that would distinguish the public interest from the interests of public employees. That is, an agenda built on the notion, nurtured through our history, that government's role should be not to engineer society to fit the notions of a radical fringe but to serve as an enabler for middle-class dreams and a guarantor of American greatness. Such a program, shaped to address the critical needs of the new century, could win significant support and create the basis for a new majority party. ♦



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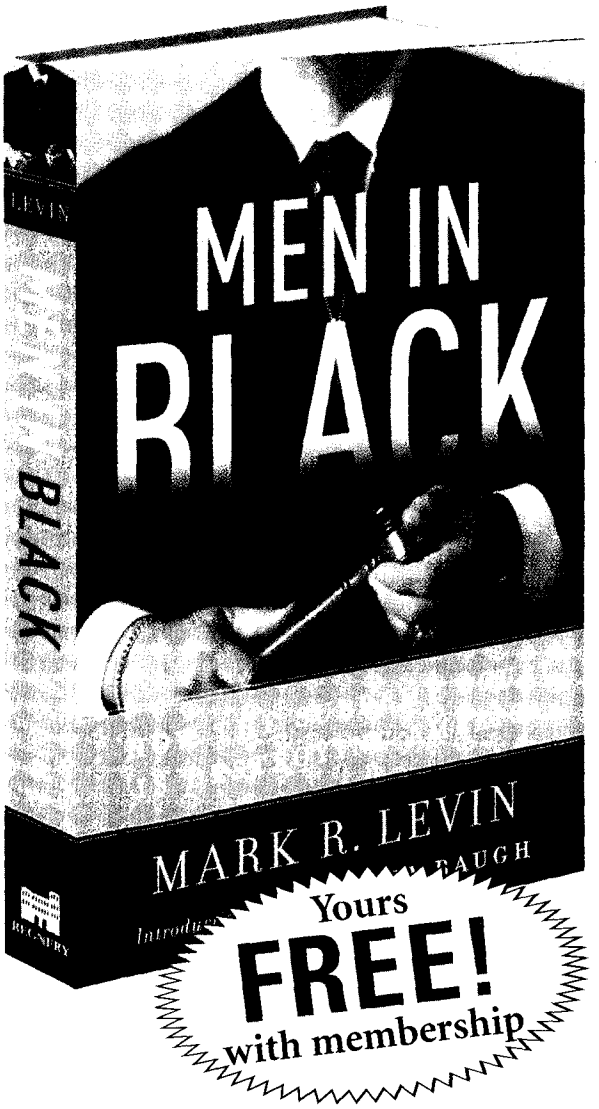


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# Forgotten Founder

## *Patriot, jurist, diplomat—John Jay gets his due*

By ROBERT J. KAUFMAN

John Jay

CORBIS

John Jay contributed mightily to achieving American independence and creating the new nation. In the pantheon of Founding Fathers, only George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison deserve unequivocally to rank higher. Jay's peers esteemed him. Yet subsequent generations have tended to slight his importance. Walter Stahr's excellent new biography should reestablish Jay's standing as one of America's great statesmen. It portrays Jay's life with a balance and command of the material worthy of the subject.

Born in New York City on December 12, 1745, Jay came from a prosperous New York family. His paternal grandfather Augustus was a Huguenot who finally settled in America after first fleeing to Great Britain after the Edict of Nantes abolished the rights of French Protestants. Augustus became a wealthy merchant, augmenting his success with his marriage to Anna Bayard, a relation of many of the most prominent Dutch families in the colonies. Jay's maternal grandfather Jacobus Von Cortlandt, also a prominent merchant and political leader, served twice as mayor of New York. Despite his family's prosperity, Jay did not have an easy childhood in Rye, New York. Four of his six older siblings had severe handicaps: Two suffered from learning disabilities and emotional troubles, and two others were blinded by the smallpox epidemic of 1739.

**John Jay**
*Founding Father*
by Walter Stahr
Hambledon & London, 482 pp., $29.99

Jay's studies began with his parents at age five. Perhaps the most devoutly Christian of the Founding Fathers, he attended an Anglican boarding school before returning home to study with a private tutor. In 1760, the 14-year-old Jay enrolled in the new King's College (now Columbia University), where he received a rigorous classical education and established a lifelong friendship with Gouverneur Morris, author of the preamble to the Constitution.

After graduation in 1764, Jay spent his next four years as a law clerk, and after admission to the bar in 1768 he formed a law practice with Robert Livingston Jr. By the mid-1770s, Jay had become one of New York's leading lawyers, handling difficult commercial and political cases, and also serving as clerk of the New York-New Jersey boundary commission. His marriage to Sarah Livingston, daughter of the royal governor of New Jersey, accelerated his rising prominence by linking him to one of the most powerful political families in the colonies.

The talents and qualities that would serve him so well as diplomat and statesman also had begun to ripen. His legal training and experience magnified his facility for writing, and for grasping and resolving complex issues. Jay worked hard and had great

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patience; and although serious and sober, he had the capacity to make and retain many friends, including those with whom he disagreed on important political issues.

The watershed year in Jay's political career was 1774. Bitter controversy over Britain's imposition of a tea tax on the colonies spurred irate New Yorkers to form a Committee of 51 (including Jay) to formulate a response to Parliament's closing of Boston Harbor and suspending civil government in Massachusetts, in retaliation for the Boston Tea Party. Jay helped forge a compromise: Instead of ceasing to import British goods, as the radicals demanded, his subcommittee agreed that New York would participate in a general Continental Congress. The Committee of 51 chose the 29-year-old Jay to represent New York as one of its five delegates.

Although his acceptance of the appointment marked a critical step in Jay's decision to become a revolutionary rather than a loyalist, Jay staked out a position of moderation, striving to reach compromise and build consensus. He agreed with John Adams and those who defined American rights broadly by reference to the laws of nature as well as Britain's unwritten constitution. But he hoped that the colonies could induce the British to recognize these rights short of declaring American independence. Even while pursuing reconciliation with Great Britain, Jay was also working to develop relations with Britain's enemy, France. In November 1775 the Continental Congress named Jay and Franklin to a committee to correspond "with Britain . . . and other parts of the world." Jay viewed the committee's contacts with Britain and France as complementary endeavors: "Though we desire reconciliation, we are well prepared for contrary measures," he wrote to his brother the following year. "God only knows why the British Empire will be torn to pieces by unjust attempts to subjugate us." By July 1776, Jay concluded that the British had given the Americans no choice but to declare, and fight, for independence. Thereafter, he was an indomitable advocate of the revolutionary cause.

Jay's main work between 1776 and 1778 lay in New York state politics. He participated extensively in the drafting of the state constitution, and the convention debates that refined the draft. He served as the first chief justice of New York's supreme court before returning to national office in 1778 as president of the Continental Congress. This position was prestigious, but not particularly powerful: The president had almost no staff, no significant role in the formulation of policy, and Congress had the authority to remove incumbents.

Jay's closest relationship at the time was with George Washington, and it served as the genesis of their mutual admiration and close political collaboration in subsequent years. Washington and Jay shared a deep sense of frustration with the inability of the Continental Congress to pursue a coherent military strategy, to stop the depreciation of the currency, and to supply the army adequately. The liabilities of the Continental Congress, exposed in times of peril, stimulated their thinking about the need for a strong national government and an energetic presidency to lead it.

In 1779 the Continental Congress appointed Jay as minister to Spain, where he endured three frustrating years vainly seeking financial assistance and formal diplomatic recognition. But Jay's Spanish mission was not all for nought: Spain remained in its own war with Britain, draining resources that the British could have otherwise brought to bear on the Americans. His rough treatment at the hands of the Spanish government also taught him valuable lessons in European diplomacy that served him well in his next assignment: as one of three members of the American delegation in Paris, along with Franklin and Adams, that negotiated the peace terms ending the War of Independence.

Most historians agree that the Treaty of Paris (1783) was a great triumph for the United States, securing an immense territory that virtually ensured our eventual emergence as a vast continental republic. John Adams hailed Jay as the "Washington of the negotiations, a very flattering comment indeed, to which I have not right, but sincerely belongs to Mr. Jay." The record supports Adams's assessment. Rightly skeptical of a French ally intent on imposing a peace less generous than what the British would offer, Jay persuaded a reluctant Franklin to negotiate independently with Britain and not subordinate American interests to those of France. Jay inspired the admiration and trust of the British negotiators, sowing the seed for the Anglo-American peace and friendship that he saw in the long-term interests of both nations. He did much of the drafting of the treaty, and mediated effectively between Adams and Franklin.

When Jay returned to New York in the summer of 1784, he discovered that the Continental Congress had selected him as its second secretary for foreign affairs, a position he held until 1790. Yet he soon came to despair about the Articles of Confederation, which precluded the United States from maintaining an army or raising sufficient revenue to pay its debts. And he feared that Europe would exploit the weakness of the Confederation. Writing to John Adams in 1785, he warned that "the federal government is incompetent to its object" and "that it was the duty of her leading characters to cooperate in measures for enlarging and invigorating it." Writing to Washington some months before the Constitutional Convention, Jay set forth the principles that the new Constitution should incorporate: Sovereignty "divided into proper departments," a strong executive along the lines of a "Governor General limited in his prerogative and duration," a "legislature divided into an upper and lower house," and a judiciary in which "the great judicial officers," along with the executive, should "have a negative" on the acts of legislators.

Jay did not participate in the convention because George Clinton, the anti-Federalist governor of New York, wanted to keep in check the nationalist opinions of Jay's friend and collaborator, Alexander Hamilton. Although aspects of the Constitution disappoint-



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ed Jay—for example, by not giving the national government sufficient authority—he considered it a vast improvement over the Articles of Confederation, and ardently defended it in public.

Jay collaborated with Hamilton and James Madison to write the Federalist Papers. He contributed only five of the essays—in part because of illness, but largely because of Madison's and Hamilton's greater gift for the enterprise. Jay focused on the inextricable linkage between the national union and national security. In *Federalist* 3 he argued why a strong union with an efficient national government would more likely avoid war than a weak one. In *Federalist* 4 he elaborated on this theme, warning that danger arose not merely from the weakness of separate states, but from the ability of foreign nations to play states off against each other. In *Federalist* 5 Jay drew parallels between the British and the American unions. He deplored the possible division of the union, in particular warning that, as separate nations, north and south would find more reasons for conflict than cooperation. In Jay's last essay, *Federalist* 64, he defended investing the prerogative of presidents making treaties with the advice and consent of the Senate.

Jay also was the leader of, and the most persuasive advocate for, ratifying the Constitution at the New York state convention. If the ratification of the Constitution hinged ultimately on the decisions of large states such as New York, Virginia, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, New York's ratification largely hinged on the deftness with which Jay mustered a narrow majority of 30 to 27 in support of ratification. His "Address to the People of New York" was the single most important document published in New York during the debate about the Constitution. His arguments carried more weight with the formidable anti-Federalist opposition, and other skeptics, than those of the more brilliant, but more polarizing, Alexander Hamilton.

George Washington chose Jay to be his first chief justice, a position in which Jay performed well, but suffered in comparison with his great successor John Marshall. His greatest service for the Washington administration, and the nation, however, came in the realm of foreign affairs, and one of the few minor shortcomings of this book is its failure to give Jay's Treaty of 1794 the attention it warrants.

Photo Images / CORBIS / Lee Snyder

*The Jay homestead (built in 1800), Katonah, New York*

Even after the Treaty of Paris, relations between the United States and Great Britain remained tense. The British continued to occupy military posts in the West that they had agreed to evacuate, and to stir up Indian tribes against American settlers. The wars stemming from the French Revolution that consumed the major European powers for more than two decades posed a great opportunity and potential danger for the new American nation. By remaining neutral, and judiciously exploiting the rivalries of the European balance of power, the United States could expand relatively unmolested and settle its frontier problems with Britain in the North and Spain in the South to our advantage, and without war. By embroiling the United States in the wars of the French Revolution, the United States would have become vulnerable to France's British and Spanish enemies at our vital flanks.

Virtually all major political figures of the day believed in neutrality, but bitter debate arose on how to define and apply it. Hamilton and Jay urged a narrow interpretation of our obligations to France under the French treaty of 1778 and a policy of neutrality tilted toward Great Britain. Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson and Speaker of the House James Madison urged a broad interpretation of the Treaty and a French orientation that risked war with Britain and Spain. Washington inclined toward Hamilton and Jay, calling for "an impartial neutrality between France and Great Britain" in his Neutrality Proclamation of 1793 that enraged Jefferson and the Francophile forces he represented in American politics. Most Americans welcomed the French Revolution, regarding it as a struggle for well-ordered liberty, analogous to our own, rather than the descent into tyranny it became.

The outbreak of Britain's war with France exacerbated the tensions in Anglo-American relations as the British adopted orders-in-council interfering with American shipping, broadly defining contraband, and brazenly impressing American seamen. The mounting dangers of conflict impelled Washington to send Jay to London to seek a negotiated settlement. The result was the Treaty of 1794, which brought Britain to the full execution of the 1783 peace treaty, and diminished the Indian threat in the Northwest. But the treaty largely accepted Britain's definition of neutral rights, which triggered virulent opposition. Crowds across the nation burned Jay in effigy. When Hamilton spoke for the treaty in New York, a mob stoned him. Nevertheless, Jay's treaty served American interests well. It averted a war with Britain, for which the United States was woefully unprepared, and it induced the Spanish to



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conclude Pinckney's Treaty of 1795, which secured American access to the Mississippi. In the long run, it also advanced Jay's great project of transcending present difficulties to facilitate future Anglo-American relations.

It is fitting that Washington asked Jay, as well as Hamilton, to comment on the draft of his Farewell Address, which reflected the terms of Jay's treaty and the logic of Jay's statecraft. Or as Washington put it: "Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course. If we remain one people . . . the period is not very far off, when we may defy material injury from external annoyance . . . when belligerent nations, under the impossibility of making acquisitions upon us, will not likely hazard the giving us of provocation; when we may choose peace or war as our interests, guided by our Justice, shall council."

Jay concluded his political career as governor of New York, winning election in 1795 by a wide margin, and serving as an effective, popular magistrate until his retirement in 1801. Jay's remaining years, comfortable but not wealthy, were spent largely out of the limelight, by choice. He long outlived his wife Sarah, who died at 45 after years of debilitating illness. He was a good father to his five children, and a good husband. He was exemplary in his private as well as his public life. In old age he read the Bible constantly, to the mild irritation of his friend John Adams, and died at 83 in 1829.

This biography has the considerable virtue of being justly admiring without being fawning. Stahr notes Jay's propensity to be especially sharp with some of his extended relations. And while admiring Jay's longstanding opposition to slavery, he chides him for keeping slaves of his own and not freeing them expeditiously or graciously. Stahr minces no words about the virulence of Jay's anti-Catholicism, a product of the persecution of his Huguenot forebears.

Walter Stahr deserves high praise for recovering the legacy of a great American statesman, and a remarkable man. ♦

# Kingdom of Mugabe

*Three volumes chronicle Zimbabwe's descent into the heart of darkness.* **BY ROGER BATE**

It is not often that journalists, used to reporting the news, become the news themselves. But when Andrew Meldrum tried to do his job as the Zimbabwe correspondent for the Manchester *Guardian*, he found himself jailed, abused, and finally illegally deported from the country he'd adopted as his home. He is noteworthy for being the first journalist tried and acquitted under AIPPA, the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, which was designed to prevent independent media from operating in Zimbabwe. *Where We Have Hope* is Meldrum's account of his working life in Zimbabwe, and it is a compelling, passionate, and witty read.

**Where We Have Hope**
*A Memoir of Zimbabwe*
by Andrew Meldrum
Atlantic Monthly, 228 pp., $24

**The Battle for Zimbabwe**
*The Final Countdown*
by Geoff Hill
Zebra, 308 pp., $21.95

**The Collapse of Zimbabwe in the Wake of the 2000-2003 Land Reforms**
*Studies in African Economic and Social Development*
by Craig Richardson
Edwin Mellon, 172 pp., $99.95

Andrew Meldrum wanted to go to the newly formed state of Zimbabwe after it achieved independence from Great Britain in 1980. He arrived with hope and was eager to report what he expected to be good news. The news was indeed broadly favorable for awhile, with the new president, Robert Mugabe, increasing spending on health and education for the black majority, with impressive results. But it didn't take long for Meldrum to be concerned by the oppressive techniques used by Mugabe and his cabal of Marxist cronies. As Meldrum recalls, Zimbabweans were beaten to death simply for reading the independent press. But he still felt optimistic. "I was amazed by the resilience of so many of the people that I interviewed," he wrote, "and how many people firmly believed that a change for the better was within their reach and were willing to risk attack to bring that about."

His interviews with justice minister Patrick Chinamasa and opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai were revealing, since they explained why the Mugabe regime became so odious. They also established Meldrum as a reporter of note at the *Guardian*. Said Chinamasa: "I belong to a generation which brought fundamental revolutionary changes not through the law or the legal process but through the barrel of a gun. The law is only a political concept. It can be used as a tool from any political angle." With that kind of attitude, it is easy to understand why violence was inevitable and why change was so desired by the populace.

The leader of the opposition, Morgan Tsvangirai, said: "What you've got to understand is that a liberation movement that has fought a war to gain power only values its own power. It does not respect laws because it had to break laws to win power. It does not respect international opinion because it had to operate without that approval. It does not respect democracy because that is not how it came to power. They only value their own power. That is why we see Mugabe dismantling everything else just to keep his power."

While Meldrum, who had upset the odious regime with one of his reports,

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was languishing in a stinky jail, Zimbabwe was appointed to the board of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. The only amusing relief for the inmates, several of whom were fellow journalists, was that they read about the U.N.'s odd decision in the government newspaper, the *Herald*. The guards told them, "You are not allowed to read the paper, you can only use it for the toilet." They felt this a fitting tribute to the government's mouthpiece.

But Meldrum was further dismayed by the U.N., which cited lack of funds for not pursuing allegations of torture against a Zimbabwe national serving on its peacekeeping force in Kosovo. Harare police officer Henry Dowa was identified by several victims as a torturer but the U.N. refused to act, and Dowa is now back in Harare going about his grisly business.

Meldrum's exit from Zimbabwe was swift: He was bundled into a car, beaten, and driven to the airport. Knowing there was no legal deportation order against Meldrum, and knowing a court order said he had the right to remain in Zimbabwe, the immigration officer dealing with him said, "We don't care about any court order; just get on the plane." With no choice, Meldrum grudgingly left the country and has not set foot in Zimbabwe since that day in May 2003. His reporting continues from Pretoria, but one day he'll go back.

A less personal but far more detailed dissection of the murderous Mugabe regime is undertaken by the *Washington Times* Africa correspondent, Geoff Hill. In *The Battle for Zimbabwe*, Hill spends a good deal of time on an interesting history of Zimbabwe, from colonial times to independence in 1980 to the fateful past few years. He treats Mugabe fairly, tellingly reporting that at least until 1989 he was far less violent than many other African leaders. Hill interviews many of the victims of Mugabe's regime, and some of these interviews deserve an X rating given the torture they describe. At times the book is delightfully amusing, invoking the irrepressible Zimbabwean humor. Hill describes the Green Bombers as Mugabe's Hitler Youth, since they specialize in pack aggression, intimidation of non-Mugabe supporters, and a talent for brainwashing themselves and many around them. They came to the fore about the same time that the Taliban were falling in Afghanistan, and behind their backs were apparently known as the "Talibob"—an amusing play on the abbreviation of their despised president's first name. After Mugabe's disastrous land grab plunged his country into economic chaos, and he blamed everyone else (notably Britain, the World Bank, and the IMF) for the collapse, rural Zimbabweans claimed it was, indeed, IMF: It's Mugabe's Fault.

Mugabe refers to whites and opposition politicians as terrorists, and there is little hope for improvement. But change must come, and, like Andy Meldrum, Geoff Hill will probably be back there to describe it. This is a good book and it pulls no punches: Hill is exasperated that no African leader has so far taken a strong stand against Mugabe. He says this may be because other leaders are behaving almost as badly as Mugabe, and don't want to criticize a fellow leader. And there is also a hangover from colonial days: Leaders don't want to support white northerners' criticism. But until African leaders oppose despotism, and democracy is the norm, Africa will never flourish.

When I first visited Zimbabwe in 1996, $1 would buy about $8 Zimbabwe. When I was there last November, $1 would get you $6000 zim at the official rate, but more like $12,000 zim on the black market. Today's bank notes are printed on only one side and with an expiration date, unemployment is about 80 percent, and the economy has halved in the past five years. Craig Richardson's *The Collapse of Zimbabwe in the Wake of the 2000-2003 Land*

Reuters / CORBIS / Howard Burditt

*Above: Robert Mugabe speaks in Bindura; below: a victim of Zimbabwe's "land reform"*

Reuters / CORBIS / Paul Cadenhead



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*Reforms* contains many socioeconomic details. Although ridiculously expensive and full of typographical errors, the book has real strength: It focuses on the fundamental reason for the recent collapse in Zimbabwe. It is not the loss of freedom of the press, or unsound monetary policy, or high military expenditure from fighting wars in other countries that benefit cronies, or low health expenditure—although all these factors have a negative impact.

No, the real reason that Zimbabwe has collapsed is that there is no protection of private property. The executive rides roughshod over the judiciary in all matters of property. The result is "dead capital," a term invented by Hernando de Soto, and total economic annihilation. The economy is now worth approximately one percent of what it was worth in 1999.

What is most important about Richardson's work is that it documents the reverse of the good news offered by De Soto. In *The Mystery of Capital*, De Soto exhaustively demonstrated that where property rights are delineated and enforced, economies grow rapidly. As if to provide the flip side, Richardson explains how the destruction of rights leads to an almost instantaneous collapse.

But he offers hope by drawing parallels with Nicaragua, which also suffered economic collapse based on the destruction of property rights under the Sandinista government. In recent years, with a more capitalist-minded government, the Nicaraguan economy has annually grown at over 4 percent, with inflation below 10 percent, which he says is mainly due to protection of property rights. The other institutions of a free society matter, but none matter so much as the right to the rewards of one's own labor.

Richardson concludes with policy advice, and at the top of the list is the reinstatement of land rights and compensation to those robbed. Turning dead capital into something with life will do more than anything else to reverse the disaster that is Zimbabwe. Whether that can happen with the current government is not something Richardson discusses. One has to look to the first two authors for opinions on that. ♦

# The O'Hara Century

*Not an easy man to know, but a rewarding writer to read, and read again.* **BY C.D.B. BRYAN**

This year marks the centennial of John O'Hara's birth. He was born on January 31, 1905, married my mother, Katharine Barnes Bryan, on January 31, 1955, and died in his sleep in their Princeton home on April 11, 1970. I was a freshman at Yale when he married "Sister," as my mother was known; and by the time of his death 15 years later, I had been married twice, had three children, become a published novelist, short story writer, and journalist, and was every bit as much in awe of O'Hara's literary output and talent as I was when I had first read him as a teenager.

Bettmann / CORBIS

It was through O'Hara that I got my start. He had read a short story I had written about an incident that had taken place when I was in the Army in Korea and thought it good enough for him to introduce me to the great *New Yorker* editor, William Maxwell.

Maxwell didn't like it; but he, too, thought I could write and after asking me what story ideas I had, suggested one that eventually did appear in the magazine. O'Hara never read another word I wrote unless it was in a letter. He didn't want anyone to think he was helping me.

By the time I knew him he had finished with his drinking, and not a moment too soon. He had been a churlish, combative drunk, not above taking a swing at a lady who had arrived late for their lunch, or punching a midget in a bar who he thought was staring at him. This is not to say he wouldn't still get sour. (All he had to do was read one of *Time* magazine's reviews of his books.)

He and my mother adored each other. He was fiercely possessive, jealous. O'Hara's hours were those of the night newspaper desk. He would work all night, then get up in the late afternoon, seldom bothering to change out of pajamas, bathrobe, and slippers. One afternoon he came out of his study in their Princeton home and discovered my mother sitting on the living room couch talking to a man he did not know. O'Hara took one long, black look, stormed back into his study, and slammed the door. Afterward, when the man had left, my mother went in to ask O'Hara what was wrong.

"It's quite obvious," he replied stiffly, "you are inviting your lover right into our house." My mother explained that the man was an upholsterer who was measuring the couch for slipcovers.

One summer he and my mother and John's daughter Wylie all traveled to Dublin. He shipped his Rolls Royce over in the belly of one of the Queens

*C.D.B. Bryan is the author, most recently, of* Close Encounters of the Fourth Kind.



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so he could drive it in Britain. It was an obscene expense, but O'Hara wanted to ride in style. One afternoon he parked the Rolls atop a hill in Dublin and remained standing beside the car while my mother and Wylie went shopping. While he was there a little street urchin came up to him and asked, "Is that your car, sor?" O'Hara said it was, and the boy responded, "'Tis a massive machine." As far as O'Hara was concerned he had been repaid the expense of the shipping.

A silver-plated ice bucket sits on my bar—a gift from O'Hara to my mother. He had it engraved:

THE SENIOR

BACKGAMMON AND GOOD HANDS TROPHY,

1955

CHAMPION

JOHN O'HARA POINTS 1,225,880

RESERVE

SISTER O'HARA

He was a ferocious competitor who couldn't stand to lose. Often in the early evening the two of them would sit at the little card table beneath his bookcase filled with all the Random House Modern Library books (gifts from his publisher and friend, Bennett Cerf) playing Scrabble. It would generally take no longer than 15 minutes for O'Hara to become apoplectic with rage. He would have been carefully hoarding his letter tiles to clear his tray when my mother would put down "mop" or somesuch nickel-and-dime word right where he had been planning to go.

At the memorial service held for John at Random House about a month after his death, Charles Poore gave the eulogy. Poore, whose thoughtful reviews of my stepfather's books in the *New York Times* provided O'Hara rare moments of pleasure, called him "the Chaucer of our age of violent affluence."

From where I sit, 35 years later, that description does not seem too big a reach. Go back to your bookshelves and pull down *Appointment in Samarra* or *Butterfield 8* or *A Rage to Live* or that wonderful trilogy *Sermons and Soda-Water*, or *From the Terrace*, *Ten North Frederick*, *Ourselves to Know*, or any of his fat short story collections. He deserves to be read again. And he deserved many of the honors he so desperately hungered for and didn't receive. That is why, in 1964, when he was presented the Award of Merit for the Novel by the American Academy of Arts and Letters (an award granted previously to Theodore Dreiser, Thomas Mann, and Ernest Hemingway), O'Hara was so moved that, near the opening of his acceptance speech, he broke down in tears and had to hand his speech to John Hersey to finish. There wasn't a member of the family there who didn't weep as well. ♦

# A Night at the Oscars

*If you love movies, it's hard to like the Academy Awards.* BY MARTHA BAYLES

People who love music hate medleys. And people who love movies hate those "Celebrate the Movies" clip reels shown on cable TV to promote movie channels, and in theaters to promote moviegoing. As one of the diehards who sat up to watch the 77th Academy Awards, I really hated the opening clip reel, put there by the movie industry to remind me how much I love movies. Even the most willing cow needs an occasional rest from the milking machine.

If the members of the Academy had wanted to attract more viewers, then perhaps they should not have been so timid about including the two most controversial films of 2004, Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* and Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*. *The Passion*, which received three nominations but did not win (Best Original Score, Best Cinematography, Best Makeup), deserved one for Best Picture and Best Director. And *Fahrenheit*, which received no nominations, deserved one for Best Documentary, a category in which fairness and accuracy have never been among the criteria.

Without remasticating the well-masticated debates over these films, I will simply note that both sold a lot of tickets to people who do not ordinarily go to the movies. So if they had not been airbrushed out of the proceedings, then perhaps all those one-time ticket buyers would have tuned in, boosting the ratings and saving us from that tacky clip reel.

It was, of course, entirely appropriate that the clip reel rolled across the ceiling of the Kodak Theater before and after each commercial break. For this is what movies are rapidly becoming: commercials for themselves. Instead of drama, comedy, suspense, or any other recognizable genre, the standard-issue Hollywood flick is now a pastiche of attention-grabbing moments meant to thrill, tickle, tease, and titillate audiences too immature or distracted to care how, or whether, they all fit together.

A perfect example is *Diary of a Mad Black Woman*, last weekend's top box office hit. Jerking loonily from soap opera to Christian uplift, gutter cruelty to gross-out comedy, it is the first feature directed by Darren Warren, a veteran director of music videos. And like music videos, it only reinforces the mini-attention span of the average popcorn buyer. It remains to be seen whether *Diary* will survive to a second weekend. Some of these messes do, some don't. The industry is now structured so that one weekend of suckers is usually enough.

*Martha Bayles, who teaches in the Honors Program at Boston College, posts a blog called* Serious Popcorn *at* www.artsjournal.com.



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Which returns us to the Oscars. If *Diary* is typical of what works in Hollywood these days, then Chris Rock was the perfect MC. His opening monologue was painfully convoluted, making sense only as an attempt to offend the right people (notably President Bush) without offending the wrong people (notably the millions who voted for Bush but might also shell out nine bucks to see a Chris Rock movie).

Rock was coherent in the worst way: He could *not* drop the race shtick, but he could *not* make it funny, either. At one point he ran a man-on-the-street segment, asking African-American moviegoers if they'd seen *Sideways*. In case you were wondering, they hadn't. The message will sound familiar to anyone over age five: Hollywood is for white folks; black folks have their own culture; so don't expect black folks to care about stars like . . . uh, Morgan Freeman (Best Supporting Actor), Don Cheadle (nominated for Best Actor), or Jamie Foxx (winner for Best Actor), or movies like . . . uh, *Ray* and *Hotel Rwanda*.

Earth to Chris: It's not about race this year. African Americans have starred in good movies and bad. This is worth taking notice of, but most moviegoers, regardless of color, are preoccupied with other topics, such as war and peace, life and death.

About war and peace, little was said at the Oscars, apart from Rock's stunningly lame joke about a "war" between the Gap and Banana Republic over nonexistent "toxic tank tops," which he followed, bizarrely, with a message of "love to the troops fighting for freedom all over the world." (To his credit, Academy president Frank Pierson offered a corrective in the form of a proper tribute to the armed forces.)

About life and death, there was (and is) more to be said. Four of the five top Oscars went to *Million Dollar Baby*: Best Picture, Best Director (Clint Eastwood), Best Actress (Hilary Swank), and Best Supporting Actor (Morgan Freeman). And the Oscar for Best Foreign Film went to *The Sea Inside*, a Spanish film that—in the opinion of just about everybody—is similar to *Million Dollar Baby* in offering a sympathetic depiction of assisted suicide.

Both *The Sea Inside* and *Million Dollar Baby* have been roundly attacked by religious conservatives and activists for the disabled. Both movies have been stoutly defended by secular liberals and "death with dignity" activists. Curiously, no one has bothered to judge them on a combination of moral and aesthetic grounds. To do that is to attack one and defend the other.

*The Sea Inside* (*Mar adentro*) is about a real man, Ramón Sampedro, who

Chris Rock

Getty / Kevin Winter

became famous for suing the legal authorities in his native Spain for the right to die. Paralyzed from the neck down by a diving accident, Sampedro (played by Javier Bardem) spent 30 years bedridden before losing his legal battle but winning his war. After publishing his memoirs, he got one of his devoted helpers to give him a glass of water spiked with cyanide.

*The Sea Inside* is beautifully produced, directed, acted, and filmed—even the music is beautiful. It is also morally tendentious in the extreme. Rather than dramatize the real debate in Spain, it shows the handsome, sexy Sampedro effortlessly humiliating Padre Francisco, a quadriplegic priest who seeks to dissuade him. Father Francisco is made to look narrowly dogmatic, and the Church is made to look inconsistent: opposing suicide, euthanasia, and abortion while supporting the death penalty.

One need not be a Catholic to grant that the Church's position on these questions is not only consistent but also philosophically compelling. And that is exactly how the Church is portrayed in *Million Dollar Baby*, a film that deserves better than to be lumped together with *The Sea Inside*.

*Million Dollar Baby* is about Frankie, a burnt-out boxing coach (Eastwood) who reluctantly agrees to train Maggie, a feisty young female boxer (Swank). Frankie is the kind of doubting Catholic who attends mass every day in order to debate the priest, the thoughtful young Father Horvak (Bryan O'Byrne). When Maggie is rendered quadriplegic by a dirty punch, she begs Frankie to disconnect her life support. Frankie consults Father Horvak, who tells him, very sympathetically, not to do it. And Frankie obeys—until Maggie starts biting her own tongue in a desperate attempt to drown in her own blood. At that point, he relents.

But this is not an advertisement for assisted suicide. On the contrary, Frankie acts in full awareness that he is committing a mortal sin. But out of pity and love, he is willing to risk his own soul for that of another. And afterward, he disappears. No one, not even his old friend Scrap (Freeman), knows where he has gone. And the audience is left with a simple question: Will God forgive him?

We can look at the Academy Awards the way the two children in the urban folktale look at the room full of pony manure. Either we can turn away, disgusted by all that you-know-what, or we can start digging, inspired by the idea that there must be a pony in there somewhere. The latter approach is worth keeping, even when faced with an Academy Awards show as dispiriting as this one, because there is still good work in there somewhere. Of course, if *The Aviator* had won Best Picture, I would have laid down my shovel. ♦



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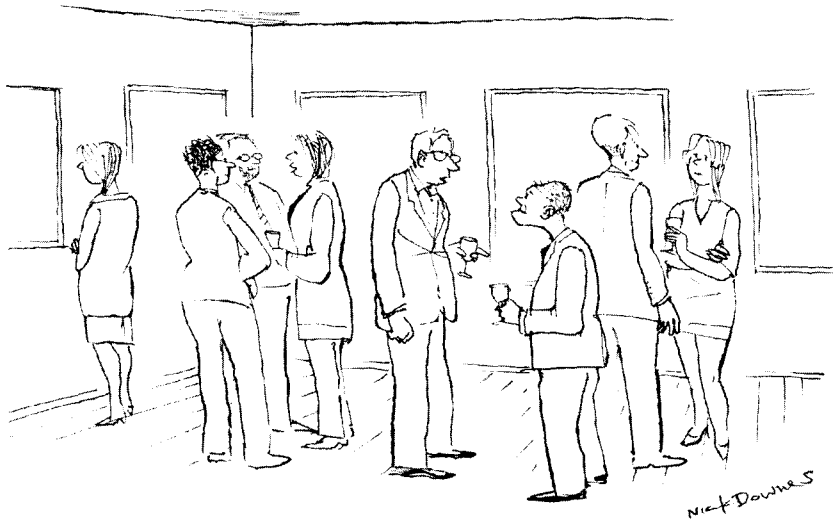

*"I understand you advocate the theory that modern humans carry the genes of the neanderthal."*

## Books in Brief

***French Women Don't Get Fat* by Mireille Guiliano (Knopf, 263 pp., $22)**

When 19-year-old Mireille Guiliano met her father at Le Havre after a year as an American exchange student, the man stared shocked at his daughter. "*Tu ressembles à un sac de patates*," he told her of her new, American figure. A return to the French way of eating and living quickly helped her shed the extra 20 pounds.

Forty years later, in *French Women Don't Get Fat*, the 112-pound Guiliano shares the secrets of the French way of staying svelte. America, she writes, "suffers from a gastronomic class system unknown in France." Americans "are conditioned to demand and accept bland, processed, chemically treated, generally unnatural foods, which through packaging and marketing have been made to seem wholesome."

To make up for the way we eat, we try fad diets, like shunning carbohydrates or dairy products, which Guiliano calls "unsustainable extremism." We also drink too much juice and hard liquor and eat too many bagels and brownies. None of these habits is healthy—or at all French.

Among Guiliano's many hints are portion control, meal planning (so as not to eat on the go), and frequent visits to the market to avoid a twice-monthly bulk purchase sure to include lots of junk food.

She doesn't insist that overweight women should visit the gym more, but advocates lots of walking—using the stairs rather than the elevator in particular.

Some of Guiliano's advice might be of little use to some readers, like her suggestions that one might order hazelnuts from Oregon after the harvest or make her own yogurt. But overall it's a fun book with plenty of practical wisdom.

*—Rachel DiCarlo*

***The Lazy Husband: How to Get Men to Do More Parenting and Housework* by Joshua Coleman, (St. Martin's, 226 pp., $22.95)**

Despite even the sincerest equity talks that precede a wedding, only marriage and children bring out partners' true beliefs about the domestic division of labor. Almost without fail women who become mothers discover they also raised their hand for extra laundry, dishes, and scrubbing.

In *The Lazy Husband*, psychologist Joshua Coleman attempts to tell women who feel helplessly understaffed in the household-help department how to lighten the load. (Hiring a maid is never mentioned.) He wastes no time lecturing on the importance of compatibility or harping on decisions past, though he does advise women to reflect a bit before formulating an enlistment plan. Women should ask themselves, for instance, whether their standards for child care and home cleanliness are unattainably high, or whether they "gatekeep," controlling the limits of their husband's involvement by being territorial or redoing his work.

The author's use of business terminology to discuss domestic conflict-resolution may be off-putting to those who would rather hear appeals to love or religion. For example: "While you and your partner may never divorce, your ever-changing standing in the marriage market affects both of your perspectives about your bargaining power." Women seeking their husband's help with housework but having trouble receiving it might increase their "bargaining position" by returning to work to strengthen financial leverage, or by losing weight to become more attractive. Coleman also encourages women to have a "strategy" to implement prior to "negotiations."

It sounds cynical and loveless. But Coleman is a realist, admitting that spouses are not always equally committed to a marriage. Still, *The Lazy Husband* is his second book dedicated to preserving marriages, many of which start with wildly divergent worldviews. Should a man who wants a traditional marriage and a careerist woman ever marry? Probably not. But when they do, his book suggests, there is something worth working to save.

*—Beth Henary Watson*



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Parody

The New York T

MONDAY, MARCH 14, 2005

# Ralph Nader Declares Candidacy In Race for Iraqi Prime Minister

## Considers Arab-American Heritage to be 'a Plus'

By JOHN F. BURNS

BAGHDAD, Iraq, March 13 — Wearing a hemp-woven dishdasha and speaking haltingly in Arabic, consumer advocate and former American presidential candidate Ralph Nader declared his independent candidacy for Iraqi prime minister today.

"Baghdad is corporate-occupied territory," Mr. Nader said in an interview on NBC's "Meet the Press." "I'm running to challenge the 111-party centedecamonopoly that is poisoning Iraqi democracy. And, insha'allah, this will be the start of a 112th-party movement that will enhance the diversity of Iraqi politics and bring new ideas, new energies, and much-needed new seatbelts into this country."

Although Mr. Nader, the son of Lebanese-Christian immigrants to the United States, speaks little Arabic, he said he would have no trouble relating to an Iraqi populace overwhelmingly concerned with security. "Salaam Aleikum, of course security is important. How many Iraqis are killed each year because their cars are not equipped with front and side airbags? How many Iraqi parents make proper use of child-safety seats when driving through the Triangle of Death?"

Other issues also concerned Mr. Nader. "For example," he said, "did you know there are 30 million Iraqis without health insurance? I'm talking no PPO. Not even a prescription drug benefit. That is unacceptable in a modern secular Western democracy, which Iraq would be if it weren't traditional, religious, Islamic, and in the Middle East."

Ralph Nader, independent candidate for Iraqi prime minister, touted his alternative form of transportation at the Detroit Auto Show last week. "Camels meet the strictest standards for reduced emissions and require very little maintenance, like water" said Mr. Nader.

When host Tim Russert informed Mr. Nader that it is impossible to run for prime minister without the backing of one of Iraq's major political parties, the former presidential candidate said, "Allahu, akbar! This is precisely the sort of democracy gap that I am talking about." Mr. Nader then announced the creation of the Green Independent Iraqi Electoral Party for Peace, known by its transliterated Arabic acronym, GRIPE.

Mr. Nader, escorted by a detail of machine-gun-toting students from Iraq-PIRG, departed in his bullet-proof Toyota Prius. His next stop was an Al Arabia interview to promote his latest work, "The Good Jihad: Declare Your Independence, Close the Democracy Gap." Mr. Nader denied being motivated by egomania, describing himself instead as "a proud citizen of the world" who

Continued on Page A8

the weekly Standard

MARCH 14, 2005

Martha Stewart Shows Off Tattoos

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# The Burden of Law


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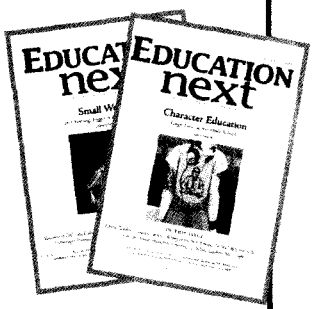


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Not long ago, I visited an inner-city Catholic high school. I was impressed with what I saw. The halls were quiet, the students respected their teachers, and the principal was the ultimate authority on issues regarding students and teachers.

I had a nagging suspicion that I had seen a school very much like this long ago. Then I remembered: I was seeing a reflection of the public high school in Houston, Texas, that I had attended a half century ago.

What had happened during the past five decades? A recent report by a nonpartisan legal reform group called Common Good gives the answer: **schools today are being strangled by a ton of laws, regulations, contracts, mandates, and rules**. The report (which can be found at http://cgood.org/burden-of-law.html) analyzes the many steps that principals in New York City must take if, for example, they want to suspend a disruptive student who is making it impossible for other students to learn or repair the heating system or remove an inept teacher.

In every situation, the principal must take care not to violate federal laws, state laws, court decisions, consent decrees, case law, union contracts, and chancellor's regulations. Common Good's Web site has links to fifty different legal authorities that limit or control what the principal can and cannot do.

All these sources are more than any one individual can possibly read or comprehend: 850 pages of state law (in small print); 720 pages of state regulations; 15,000 formal decisions by the state commissioner; [illegible] pages of collective bargaining agreements; thousands of pages of federal laws affecting the schools; and thousands of pages of chancellor's regulations.

The principal who determines that a student is disrupting the learning environment or is a danger to himself or others must embark on a very lengthy legal process that involves multiple letters, notifications, conferences, hearings, appeals, decisions at the local level, more conferences, more hearings, more appeals, decisions at the regional level, more hearings, more appeals, and so on. It may take several weeks to resolve the matter.

Philip Howard, the chairman of Common Good and a lawyer, has been leading a campaign against the procedural burden imposed by law on our institutions. Howard insists that we should make educating our children our top priority, not complying with a mountain of laws, mandates, and regulations. According to Howard, **"We should let the administrators and teachers use their judgment and then hold them accountable for their performance."**

Common Good has not placed a price tag on the cost of compliance, but it is bound to be huge in terms of inefficiency, wasted time, resources diverted, and the inability of the schools to focus relentlessly on education.

Is it possible to free the schools from the smothering embrace of their friends who write the rules, laws, regulations, and mandates? If we do not figure out how to restore authority to teachers and principals, then our schools will continue to become ever more expensive and ever less effective.

—Diane Ravitch

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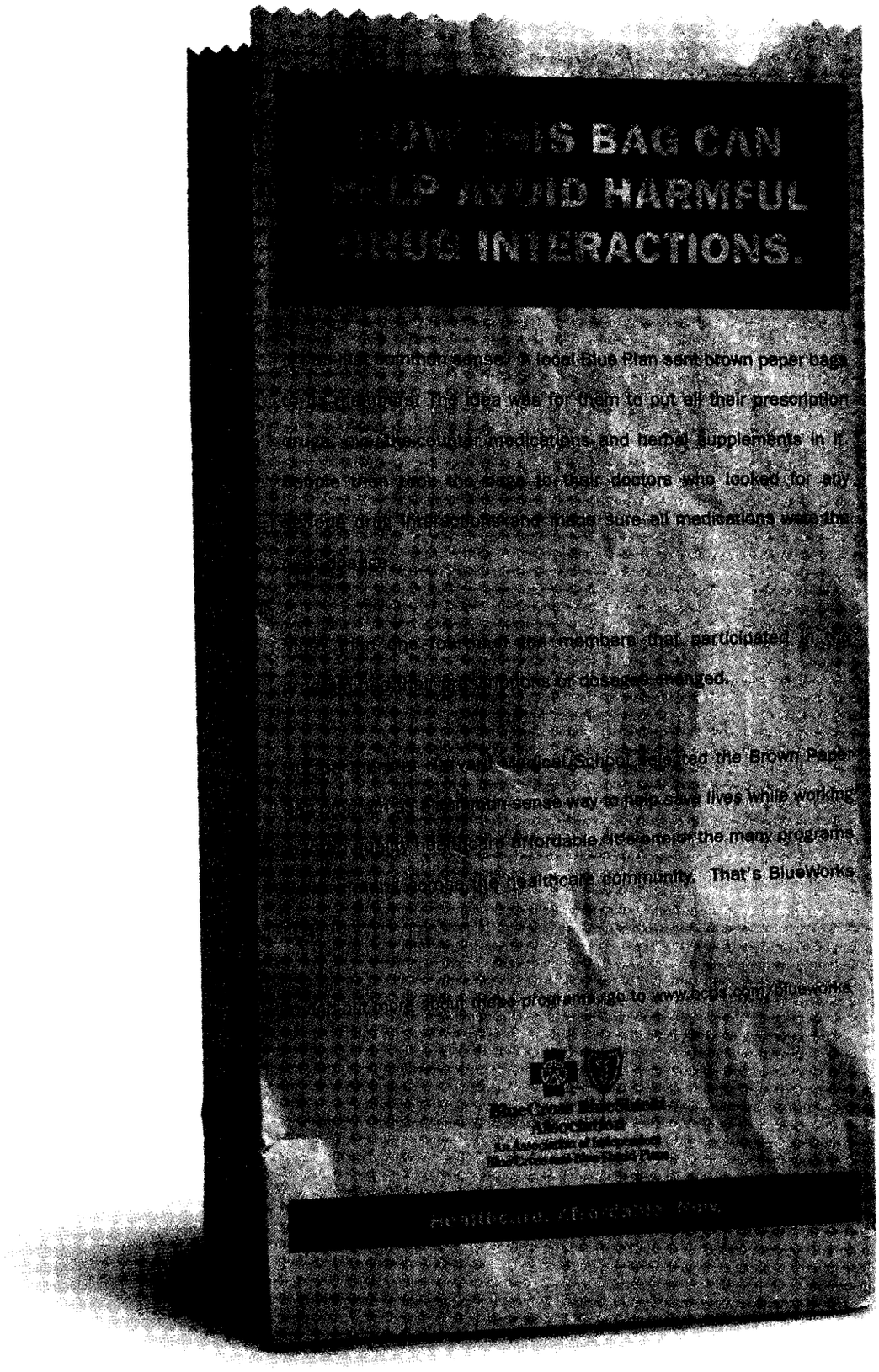


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